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VOL. V.



GOD'S MESSAGE TO THE POOR.

BRING

ELEVEN PLAIN SERMONS

PREACHED IN PLUCKLEY CHURCH.

BY THE

REV. ASHTON OXENDEN,

RECTOR OF PLUCKLEY, KENT.

LONDON :

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TO THE
PARISHIONERS OF PLUCKLEY,
AMONG WHOM THE AUTHOR HAS,
IN THE PROVIDENCE
OF GOD,
BEEN CALLED TO MINISTER,
THIS VOLUME OF PLAIN SERMONS,
ALREADY PREACHED TO THEM FROM THE PULPIT,
IS AFFECTIONATELY
DEDICATED.



PREFACE.

IT has pleased God that the Author's ministerial labours, both in his present and former parishes, have been chiefly among his Poorer Brethren. He has felt that, on their account, his Sermons should be of the simplest description. It has, therefore, been his great desire that his preaching should be such, as to be level with the understanding of the most unlearned of his hearers. He

has earnestly endeavoured to preach the truth affectionately, and thus to win men's hearts to Christ ; to convince them of their need of a Saviour, and to show them how lovingly that Saviour invites them to come unto Him. How far a gracious God may have seen fit to bless his unworthy labours, the Great Day will alone disclose. With regard to both his preached, and these his published, sermons, he would desire to adopt this prayer,—

LORD, ACCEPT WHAT IS THINE,
AND PARDON WHAT IS MINE.

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SERMON I.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF CHRIST'S POOR.

LUKE 6. 20.

“And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor ; for yours is the kingdom of God.”

WHEN we look at the condition of mankind, we see that the greater number are poor, and only a small number are rich. This is not only the case in our own land, but in every country. It always has been the case, and it always will be so ; for it is written in the word of God, “ The

poor shall never cease out of the land."

We are accustomed to look upon riches as a great blessing, and on poverty as a misfortune. But "God seeth not as man seeth." *We* are caught by the outward appearance, but *He* looks deeper, and judges far more wisely. If He thought riches to be in every case a blessing, he not only *could*, but he certainly *would*, bestow them.

Surely, then, we may discover that there is some hidden evil connected with riches, and some secret blessing belonging to a poor and humble condition.

Let us see what the word of God says about riches.

King Solomon, who was certainly the wisest, and also the richest man of his time, declares that "riches

profit not in the day of wrath." (Proverbs 11. 4.) "Better is little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure and trouble therewith." (Proverbs 15. 16.) And again, he gives us this solemn and deliberate advice, "Labour not to be rich." (Proverbs 23. 4.)

St. Paul, in his first letter to Timothy, utters this warning, "They that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare; for the love of money is the root of all evil. But thou, O man of God, *flee these things.*" (1 Timothy 6. 10, 11.)

But what says our Lord himself,—he who knows so well what is really good for man? In the Parable of the Sower, he tells us that the good seed is sometimes "choked by riches." (Matthew 13. 22.) In the chapter from which our text is taken, he says, "Woe unto you rich; for ye have

received your consolation." And at another time he exclaims, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven!" (Mark 10. 23.)

So speaks that word of God, which is truth itself. And I have often thought with sadness on the state of a rich man, whose heart is not given to God. At first sight he *seems* to be happy. His chief aim is to please and gratify self. He has everything that money can purchase for him. But when we think of him as one who is *on his trial* here—born for eternity—and having a never-dying soul—then how fearful is his condition! Wrapped up in himself, but not laying himself out for God—his mind so taken up with the world, that he can think and talk of little else—*going* on day after day as if he felt

that the day would never come, when he should be called to give his account of every wasted hour, and of every buried talent—not committing, perhaps, any particular outward sin, which men can lay hold of, but still leading a useless life—a cumberer of the ground—doing little or nothing to benefit his fellow-men, nothing to glorify God ! Brethren, do you think that riches can be a blessing to such ?

Or, take another case. Here is a man who is not born rich, but who is getting an honest livelihood, and doing well in the world. But *money is his God*. His great aim is to become rich. He may be a very honest man : not a whisper may be breathed against him. But yet *money is his God*. He is laying up his treasure on earth, and his heart is there. He is toiling hard ; but it is for “ the meat

that perisheth." From Monday morning till Saturday night, his business takes up all his thoughts. His heart is engaged, and God must be shut out. The concerns of his soul must for the present be put aside. Then the Sabbath comes, but his mind is little fitted for spiritual things. The world is still uppermost, still nearest to his heart. And so, years roll on, and his treasure increases; but at last, when it is too late, perhaps, he discovers that he is not rich towards God,—that he has neglected his soul!

Now what think you of riches to such a man? Can we wonder that our Lord should have said, "Woe unto you that are rich;" and, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven!" I am persuaded, they are a great temptation.

They are like so many gold and silver chains, binding us down to earth !

Many of you, whom I am now addressing, belong to the humbler and poorer class. Brethren, I want you to see a reason for thanking God, that he has chosen this condition for you. I want to shew you, that the benefit is not all on the side of the Rich. There are some great and precious advantages also belonging to the Poor.

In the FIRST PLACE, there is something in religion, which exactly *meets the wants of the Poor man.*

As to worldly things, there may be but little here to make this life desirable to you. You have, perhaps, but few earthly comforts ; for they are beyond your reach. Trials may crowd upon you. Sickness may enter

your cottage, or work may be short, or your expected crop may fail you. But at the moment when you are most beset with difficulties, how blessed for you to know, that there is a brighter and a better world before you ! The rich man is too often blind enough to fancy, that *this* is his home, and he seems to wish for no other. But the poor man is constantly reminded by his many wants and sufferings, that "this is not his rest," but that "there remaineth a rest to the people of God." Oh, what a change for him, to be removed from this painful, toilsome world, to one of unclouded happiness !

My dear brethren, if the world has so little to offer you, thank God that religion has so much to give you, —such comfort ! such riches ! such support ! Thank God that there is so

little to make you wish to take your portion here—so much to lead you to seek a better inheritance. I know that some of you are often in want, and driven hard to obtain your daily bread. Be it so, if such is God's will. Then you will be the more inclined to look up to the hand which feeds you, and to live from day to day in simple dependence upon Him, who is your Father, and your Friend.

Thus, then, although the world may have little to offer to the Poor man, yet he may be happy—happy even now—happy in his God—happy in laying up treasure above—happy, if he is on his way to heaven—happy, if he is of a contented mind—happy, if he sees his family around him living in the fear of God, and in love with one another. “Better (said king Solomon—aye, and perhaps, whilst

he said it, he almost envied the poor man's lot) better is little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure, and trouble therewith. Better is a dinner of herbs, where love is, than a stalled ox, and hatred therewith." Proverbs 15. 16, 17.

Then, I say, you may be poor; yet if you are a servant of Christ—if your heart is given to Him—blessed are you: "Blessed be ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God."

But I must mention ANOTHER ADVANTAGE. The Bible, which God has given us, may in a special manner be called, "*The Poor man's Book.*"

The man of learning, it is true, if he be a man of God, will understand much that his unlearned neighbour cannot. But still, the man of no *learning*, no talents, and but few op-

portunities, may turn to his Bible in quest of comfort and direction ; and there, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he will find it. And here we see the great mercy and goodness of God ; for though there are great depths in Scripture, yet it is very remarkable, that those things, which it most concerns us to know, are the most plainly written. So the Bible is as much the Poor man's book, as it is the Rich man's. Yes, and I will go farther, and say that the Poor man's mind is likely to be in a *better* state to receive it, and value it. He will have a readier ear for its heavenly tidings, and will be more likely to welcome its truths with simple faith and affection. "Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He hath

promised to them that love Him?"
James 2. 5.

You will say, Cannot the learned bring forward strong arguments to prove the truth of the gospel? Yes, this is true. But then the poor man has *his* reasons too, for believing it to be from God. And I question whether his reasons are not the most powerful.

Some such argument as this, perhaps, will be his. "I lived once unconcerned about my soul. I thought only of the labours and enjoyments of to-day. I cared nothing for the worm, which might gnaw me to-morrow. I was brought, however, by sickness, or by disappointment, or by the death of one whom I loved, or by a startling sermon, to fear that all was not right between me and God. I grew more and more anxious. I

felt that I was in danger. I had no peace. At length my minister, or some pious friend, spoke to me of that Saviour, who could deliver me from the curse of sin. Here was, indeed, a ray of light. I felt that this was the very Saviour I needed. I saw that He could supply my every want, that He had a cordial for every fear, a balm for every wound. And ever since, the more I have read the Bible, the more I have felt as though it must almost have been written on purpose for myself. It seems to know all my cares, and all my temptations. *Why* then do I believe in Christ? Oh, it is because I feel Him to be God my Saviour,—that is my proof. *Why* do I believe the Bible? I have found it to be God's own word,—that is my witness."

Thus does the Bible speak home to the child of God, though he may have but little learning. He has "the witness in himself." The truth which he reads, he *feels*, he *knows*, he is *assured*, is no other than God's truth. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." Matthew 11. 25.

A THIRD ADVANTAGE, which the Poor man has, is that he is not so apt to be harassed by the difficulties of Scripture, as the man of learning. He feels that he has nothing to do with these. It is enough for him to get hold of the broad, plain, truths which most concern his salvation—the sinfulness of man—his deliverance

by the blood-shedding of a Saviour—the gift of the Holy Spirit—on these he dwells.

Sometimes, when called to kneel by the bed-side of some poor humble Christian, I have almost envied his simple faith in Christ. He may know but little, but this he knows, that he is an unworthy sinner, and that Christ is his precious Saviour; and to Him alone his eyes are turned. He has but little knowledge in his *head*, but he has much in his *heart*; for Christ himself is there, whom “to know is eternal life.” When I see this, I am led to exclaim, “Blessed be ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.”

LASTLY, the Poor have the comfort of feeling, that *their Lord and Master was poor also.*

Brethren, is hardship your lot? Then remember Him, who "had not where to lay his head." Matthew 8. 20. Are you poor? Of you then your Saviour thought, when he said, "The poor have the Gospel preached to them." Matthew 11. 5. Are you poor? Oh! think of Him, who, "though He was rich, yet for your sakes became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." 2 Corinthians 8, 9.

It may be, you have gone through many trials, and, perhaps, there are more before you. My advice to you is, to place yourself under God's guidance and protection. He says, "Be careful for nothing;" that is, Be not over-anxious about the future. "Cast all your care upon Him, for He careth for you." Honour Him by a meek submission to his will. Try to

praise Him, even in the hour of want. When you pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," believe that He *can* give it you, and that He surely *will*, if you are diligently seeking it, and are earnestly serving Him.

From what has been said, do not go away supposing that either riches or poverty can *in themselves* save, or ruin, a soul. Thank God, there is many a rich man in heaven; many a one, who during his life-time has loved and served his Saviour. Thank God, there is many a poor man there also. But neither rich nor poor can be there, unless they belong to Christ, unless they have faithfully followed Him here, and been washed in his precious blood. Observe, who were the poor whom our Lord in the text pronounced "blessed." He lifted up

His eyes, not upon a mixed crowd of people, but upon some of his own faithful followers, and said, "Blessed be ye poor." They were poor as regards their outward condition, and poor also within. They were meek, humble, and gentle, like their Master. And such is the state of heart which he approves ; "Blessed are *the poor in spirit*, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Oh! my friends, seek to be his disciples ; and then you shall have a disciple's reward. No matter how low your condition ; if God be your God, if Christ be your Saviour, if heaven be your home, then are you rich indeed. Go on your way rejoicing. And when you lay your head down upon your pillow to-night, thank God that, whilst many have chosen their portion here, you

are still invited to seek a better portion, "a treasure in the heavens that faileth not."

SERMON II.

SIN, OUR DISEASE.

ROM. 5. 19.

“ By one man’s disobedience many were made sinners.”

IN every building it is very important to lay a solid, substantial groundwork; and as it is my earnest desire and prayer to build you up, my brethren, in the faith of Christ, I would begin by making you acquainted with those great and leading truths, which seem to be laid down in Scripture, as a sort of foundation for the whole Christian building. I

mean such truths as these—Man's state as a fallen, sinful creature—Our redemption through Christ—Our need of a change of heart—The necessity of holiness.

I propose taking for my subject this afternoon, *Man's state as a sinner before God*. And may God remove every covering which blinds our eyes, and shew us what we really are in his sight !

Supposing a man was to grow up from his childhood, without ever having read God's word, or heard it preached. Supposing he was to be told, that this world was made by an Almighty Being, full of power, wisdom, and love. Still there would be much to perplex him. He would look around him, and see many things out of order ; the earth bringing forth of its own accord thorns, and weeds,

which are of no manner of use, and which require much toil and labour to root up. He would see some of God's creatures having enough and to spare, and others suffering from actual want. He would find hundreds bowed down with pain, and disease, and sorrow. "And how is this?" he might exclaim, "Is this the work of Him who is allwise, a God of love?" Yes, brethren, so it is. If you look into the 1st Chapter in the Bible, you will see a picture of God's world, when it was first created—a beautiful, lovely picture. We are there told, that "God saw everything that He had made; and, behold, it was very good." There was no flaw, no defect in his work. All was perfect. God made man upright, after his own image and likeness. He was holy, and therefore happy. There was not

a sin to disturb him, nor a sorrow to grieve him, nor a pain to torment him. God was his Friend. He enjoyed the full sunshine of his favour. And so he might have lived on, happy for ever. But, alas, a dark cloud soon passed over him. You may read in the 2nd and 3rd of Genesis, the sad history of what happened. God put man upon his trial. He placed him in the happy garden of Eden, and gave him full liberty, *excepting on one point*. He told him that there was just *one single tree* that he must not eat of; for "in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shall surely die." That is, they should no longer live for ever, but they should from that moment become dying creatures; they should be subject to death.

It might seem a small thing to eat from a forbidden tree. But God

chose this to prove him, and to try his obedience. He might have tried it by any other command: but this was enough. Man was found wanting. He disobeyed God, and lost His favour. In the chapter before us, the apostle says, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men." And again in our text, St. Paul declares, "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners."

Adam was the head, as it were, of our family. Adam sinned, and so lost the favour of God; and we his children, all of us, inherit his sinful and corrupt nature. Every one of us was born into this world a sinner, a child of wrath. Every heart is by nature a corrupt, evil heart. And unless it is changed by grace, it will feel no love for God, and it will take

no delight in his ways. Sin, like some dreadful disease, runs through the whole family of mankind. Go where you will, from one end of the earth to the other, you will everywhere find it; all are infected by it. "Behold (says David) I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Psalm 51. 5.

Only look at a little child, and you will at once see that man's nature is sinful. Do we not observe in the youngest infant violence of temper, bursts of passion, fretfulness, jealousy, and self-will? As he grows older, how hard it is to teach him what is right, how easily he is led wrong! Sin comes naturally to him. There is no difficulty in making him learn to swear, to lie, or to disobey. But try and teach him to know God, to love his Saviour, to do His will, and

to walk in the ways of holiness, and you will soon see that this is a hard matter; nay, actually impossible, unless God touches the heart, and changes it by his grace.

Thus, then, "by one man's disobedience many were made sinners." By that one act of rebellion, Adam brought ruin upon the whole world. It is well always to bear this in mind. Look upon this world as a fallen, decaying, world; a "world lying in wickedness." Look also at man in his true character, not naturally an upright being, but a sinner before God, —a sinner so lost and ruined, that nothing less than the blood of God's own Son could save him.

Yes, it is most clear from God's word, what is the view He takes of man's condition. We read in Psalm 14, "God looked down from heaven

upon the children of men to see if there were any that did understand, and seek after God." And what is the judgment He forms of them? "They are *all* gone aside, they are all together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

And our own experience tells us just the same thing. Men are ready enough to acknowledge it in a general way. Why, you have every one of you acknowledged it within the last hour, in this very house. You have solemnly owned before God, "We have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep. We have left undone what we ought to have done, and done what we ought not; and there is no health in us." Men are ready enough, I say, to own this *in a general way*. How often we hear such acknowledgments as this,—"We

all have sinned"—“ To be sure there’s none of us without sin.” But this is not enough. We must bring the matter home to each man’s conscience. We say to you individually, “ Have *you* sinned ?” And then immediately you begin to shelter yourself ; to wrap yourself round with some false covering—“ I am no worse than my neighbours ;” “ I am not an open sinner, as some are.” Thus your own heart deceives you. You own that *all* have sinned, and yet you deny that *you* have sinned.

Ah, brethren, is it not so ? We ministers find it the hardest of all things to convince men of their guilt. We go to one man, who is living a careless ungodly life. We try to shew him that he is wrong. He cannot see it. His eyes are blinded. Or, if he does see it, he perhaps feels no grief,

no self-abasement, no concern for his state. We go to another, lying perhaps on his sick bed, with death staring him in the face. We find, it may be, that he is asleep, as regards his soul. We try to arouse him; to awaken him to a sense of his danger. But all in vain. His heart is cold and unmoved. There is no conviction of sin; no earnestness about his soul. And this is no more than we must expect, unless God's awakening Spirit arouse the attention, and convert the heart. *We* may speak; but *God* must give power to our words. We may shoot the arrow; but God alone can carry it home to the heart. Our Lord, when speaking of the Holy Spirit, in John 16, says, "When He is come, *He* shall convince the world of sin." And it is when the Spirit of God comes into a man's heart, that that heart be-


gins to feel its sin, and to desire to be released from it. Then we begin to see things very differently from what we once saw them. Sin was once a trifle ; a light matter with us. But now we feel its dreadfulness. We feel it as a heavy burden upon our souls ; and our anxious cry is, " Who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?"

My brethren, I would wish to show to you your sins ; because I am sure, until you have learnt this lesson, you know nothing yet as you ought to know. Until you feel your disease, you will have no desire to be cured ; for " they that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Now, let me speak a few plain words to you. You are perhaps saying to yourself, " Whatever others may feel, I am not guilty before God ; my con-

science is quite easy." But let me remind you, there are many acts of your life which are passed, and long since forgotten by you, which are all remembered by God. Can you not, even at this moment, call to mind something that you have done wrong? Have you not, at some time or other, taken God's name in vain? Have you never broken his sabbaths? Have you always been strictly honest? Have no unholy desires been allowed to lodge in your heart? Have you never thought, or spoken, evil against your neighbour? Our Saviour says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with *all thy heart*, with *all thy mind*, with *all thy soul*, and with *all thy strength*." Have you thus given your heart, your *whole* heart, to God? Have you *really* loved Him? Have you not loved the things of the world

better? If you could only remember all the evil *thoughts* that have entered your mind; all the silly, idle, trifling words you have spoken, and which are noted down in God's Book; all the hours you have wasted, and all the days you have misspent; it would indeed make you shudder, and you would cry out from the bottom of your heart, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

Indeed, if I could know as God knows, and see as He sees, should I not find that many of us have done wrong *this very day*? When we rose from our beds this morning, did we pray to him as *earnestly* as we ought? Have we been thinking about our souls on this holy day? Have we felt glad that it is the Sabbath-day, or have we wished that the day was over? And just now, whilst we were




upon our knees, did we pray with our *hearts*, as well as with our *lips*? I fear that some of us cannot answer these questions, without feeling that we are guilty. And what does all this prove? Why it proves to us, that man is a corrupt being, inclined to evil. And it proves more. It proves that we are in *great danger*; for it is written, “The wages of sin is death.”

My brethren, look to your own hearts, I entreat you. Depend upon it, you cannot hide your sins from God, though you may even hide them from yourself. How vain are all our pretences and coverings! God sees us just as we are. We may deceive our neighbour, or our minister, or ourselves; but we cannot deceive Him. “I, the Lord, search the heart.” Not I *have*; or *will* do it; but “I search”—I do it now, always. Not a moment

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of our lives, but his pure, calm, searching eye has been gazing on the inmost recesses of our hearts. He knows what is within. He has seen all the lusts, and passions, which have rankled there. All is open before Him. And is not this thought enough to make you tremble ?

But it is well to know the worst. Happy is it, if a glimmering of light has come into your soul, showing you what you are. Have you not sometimes gone into a dark room, and fancied that all was clean : but presently a gleam of sunshine bursts through the window ; and then you begin to see ten thousand particles of dust floating in the light ? The dust was there before, but you saw it not. And so it is with our hearts. Sin is there with all its loathsomeness ; but then we see it not, we



feel it not, till God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, shines into our hearts.

Yes, it is well to know the truth, painful though it be. It is indeed a great mercy, if God has removed the veil from before our eyes; if our proud hearts have been brought low; and we have been led to fall upon our knees, and say for the first time in our lives, "Father, I have sinned, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."

Now then, I trust, I have said enough to show you that man—every man upon earth—and we among the number—are sinners before God.

But, my dear brethren, I cannot leave you here. I have told you plainly of your disease; and shall I say nothing of your remedy? "Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no

Physician here?" If there should be among you one soul, conscious of its guilt, and anxious to be released, I would tell that soul that there is forgiveness; there is a way of escape. If then you feel your need of pardon, and long to receive it, go to that Saviour whom God has provided. Lay down your sins before his cross. Believe on Him, and be saved. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!"

SERMON III.

CHRIST OUR REMEDY.

JOHN 3. 16.

“ God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

IN my last sermon I spoke to you about that spiritual disease, which we all of us have by nature. To-day I am going to call your attention to the GREAT REMEDY which God, in his mercy, has provided for us. Our disease is sin : we are all by nature sin-

ners. Our remedy is the atonement of Christ.

Oh, my friends, what a glorious and welcome subject to dwell upon ! If I could get up, and tell you, what you might do to get rich ; or, if I had a sure and unfailing remedy for your bodily health, it would be worth hearing. But I stand here to proclaim to you something of greater importance still—to tell you how your *soul may be saved*. And I know of no passage in the whole of Scripture, which sets this forth so plainly, and so fully, as the one before us. May God give me grace rightly to explain it to you ; and may he prepare your hearts to receive it ! “ God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Now here we come at once to the



great source and spring of all our spiritual blessings—the love of God—“ God so loved the world.” No wonder that God loved the world before sin came into it, and made it what it now is. No wonder that he could love Adam, while he was holy, and obedient, and upright. But He still loved him, even when he had fallen. When man became a rebel against God, and the seeds of sin sprang up within him, poisoning his heart, and filling it with hatred, instead of affection; even then God’s feeling towards him was that of love. Like as a father pitieth his erring child, so God looked with pity on our condition. He felt the tenderest compassion for us. Instead of thrusting us away, and leaving us in our misery, he devised means whereby his banished ones might return. He opened a door of

mercy ; and provided for us a way of deliverance.

My brethren, if you know anything of the dark spots in your own heart ; if you feel how little, how very little, you have loved God, you will be amazed to think how he loves you. What untiring patience ! what great forbearance ! what unspeakable tenderness he has shown ! Might he not long ago have cut us off in our sins ? Yet, He has spared us ; and here we are this day the monuments of his grace and love ! Here we are met together, to be told once more that God is willing to save us, if only we are willing to be saved. Oh, who can measure his love ? It has reached up to heaven, to open a way for us. It has stooped down to hell, to rescue us. It is a love that “ passeth knowledge.” Our Lord even does not

measure it. All he says is that "God so loved the world"—so exceedingly—so richly—so undeservedly. Instead of hating us as we deserve, he loves us. Instead of holding forth the sword of vengeance, he stretches out the arms of his mercy. Instead of saying to us, "Depart from me," his language is, "Come unto me;" and "him that cometh I will in no wise cast out."

But our text reminds us of *that one special act*, by which God displayed his great love towards us. God's love to us has been shown in many ways. But there is one gift which exceeds all the rest. I mean the gift of his own dear Son, as a ransom for our souls. "God so loved the world, that He gave his only-begotten Son."

Man had sinned, and forfeited for

ever God's favour. And how could the debt be paid? The blood of bulls and of goats could never put away sin. Silver and gold could never pay the debt. It cost more to redeem a soul. If the holiest man that ever lived had come forward, and given himself up, he could not have atoned for his own sins, much less for the sins of a whole world. What then must be done? Why "God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." Romans 8. 32. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." 1 John 4. 10. Had he waited, till we began to move the first step towards Him; had he said, "I will withhold this great gift, till man shows that he is worthy to receive it;" then he would have waited for ever. It was just when we

were in the very depth of misery ; when we were utterly unable to help ourselves ; that God put forth his hand to save us. “ When we were yet without strength (says the apostle) in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die ; yet peradventure for a good man *some* would even dare to die. But God commended his love towards us, in that *while we were yet sinners* Christ died for us.” Romans 5. 6, 7, 8.

Oh amazing love ! There was never anything like it before. We have heard of a son dying for his father. We have heard of a man dying for his country. But we never heard of any one but Jesus dying *for his enemies*.

And what should we be, my brethren, if God had not given us his Son ? What hope could we have of

heaven, if Christ had not purchased our admission there, by the price of his own blood? No amount of repentance, however sincere, could have put away sin. Floods of tears could not have washed out our guilt. No future amendment could have done away with the past. No, our case would have been utterly hopeless, if the Son of God had not come forward to rescue us from eternal death. The sheep must have perished, if "the Good Shepherd" had not given his life for them.

Will you not then lift up your hearts to God, and thank Him for this unspeakable gift? Does not a feeling of shame come across you, that you could have ever loved *Him* so coldly, who hath so loved us? Truly, if we had nothing else to thank God for; if we had not one

single other mercy but this, it would be enough to call forth all our gratitude—to think that we have a Saviour, one who is able to save us from eternal death, and bestow upon us everlasting life! This will be the subject of our song of praise throughout eternity!

But stop, brethren; there is yet another very important point in our text, which we must not pass over. It has told us of God's love. It has told us how that love was specially shown, in giving us his Son. It has told us that we need not perish, but live for ever.

But now the question comes, "Will *all* then be saved?" "If Christ died for all, will *all* escape? Will *all* live for ever?" No: but few, alas, will be saved. The way to

heaven is plain; the gate is thrown wide open; but "few there be that enter in." The work has been done—the work of our redemption. This great salvation has been purchased. It is freely offered to every one of us. But it must be *accepted*, and *laid hold of* by us. Our text says, "that whosoever *believeth* shall not perish, but have everlasting life." Faith then is the means, by which this salvation is made ours. When the Jailor at Philippi came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, in the prison, crying out in the agony of his soul, "What must I do to be saved?" their answer was, "*Believe* in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." If Christ was now upon earth, and any one of you felt conscious of your danger and misery by *reason* of sin, and anxious to be par-

done, what would you do? Why you would not *sit still*, and say, "Christ has come to save me, and that's enough." No, you would *go to Him*, and kneel down at his feet, and say, "Lord, thou art come to save the lost; save me, a miserable sinner. Thou hast welcomed others; O receive and pardon me!" But Christ is not upon earth now. He is in heaven. Still his power, and his love are the same. Though we cannot see Him, we may believe on Him. We may go to Him in faith. We may put ourselves in his hands. And it is written for our unspeakable comfort, "He that believeth shall be saved," that is, he that believes with his heart, and gives that heart to Christ.

There is such a thing as believing with the *head* only. Most men do

that. There is not a man here, perhaps, who does not believe that Christ has come into the world, and has died upon the cross for sinners. But the faith that saves is something more than this. It is a living faith. It is an earnest looking to Christ. It is a hearty reliance upon Him, as the One who can alone save our souls.

Perhaps I can make this plain to you by a simple illustration. We will imagine that one of you has fallen into a deep gloomy pit. You look up, and see that the sides are so steep, that there is not the slightest hope of your escaping without assistance. You lie there for some time, till at length you begin to feel alarmed. You know that if you remain there, you must perish; and to save yourself is out of the question. Suddenly, to your great joy, a footstep is heard


approaching the pit, and some one appears. He hears your cry, and is come to deliver you. He has in his hand a rope, which he lets down for you to hold by. You do not hesitate for a moment. The man is come to save you, and you believe it. You look upon him as your Friend. You know that he has the will, and the power, to rescue you. In an instant you eagerly grasp the rope, and trust entirely to your kind Deliverer.

Now, brethren, *we* have fallen, if I may so speak, into a deep pit, by reason of our sins. If left to ourselves, we shall remain there to perish everlastingly. We have no power of our own. But Christ is come, bringing to us salvation. And faith is the hand, as it were, by which we receive it. By faith we lay hold of Christ. Happy is it if we can say

with David, "He brought me up out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings." Psalm 40. 1.

You see, then, what we mean by faith. And you understand how it is necessary, in order that a man may be saved, "that whosoever believeth in Christ may not perish, but have everlasting life."

I now wish to leave with you two solemn thoughts. And may God bless them to your soul. One is, "If Christ has died for me, then how great will be my condemnation, if I reject his offer of mercy! Woe be to me if I shall have to say hereafter, I heard of his love, but my heart was too hard to be moved by it. He freely offered to save me, but I would not be saved." Oh! my friends,



it will be far worse if we have heard the gospel, and yet put it from us, than if it had never reached our ears. It will be far worse for you, if you go home to-day unmoved, than if the message of salvation had never been placed before you. Better never to have known the way of life, than having known it, to treat it with scorn or indifference.

Again, carry away with you *this* precious thought also, *What joy, what peace, what safety there is from those who are in Christ!* Their debt is paid; their sins forgiven; their souls saved! Was Noah safe in the ark? The rain descended; the flood came; the very windows of heaven seemed to be opened. He looked around him, and saw thousands swallowed up on every side of him. But he was sheltered by the Lord. He was safe,

blessedly safe, within the ark ! And who is there, my friends, that is not daily exposed to the troubles of this stormy world ? We have all our pains, and sorrows, and trials to pass through. But, how secure are those who are under Christ's shelter ! Troubles may come, temptations may come, sickness may come, and even death may come ; but who can separate us from the love of Christ ? who can lay anything to our charge, if we are His ?

Go then to the Lord, and tell Him that you are ashamed of your coldness and unbelief. Ask Him to take it away, and to give you faith. It is His gift. It grows not naturally in the soil of your heart. God must plant it there himself. Entreat Him to give you a solemn conviction of *your state as a sinner*, and to reveal

to you, in all his fulness, that Saviour,
who can grant your pardon now, and
everlasting life hereafter.


SERMON IV.

THE CHRISTIAN A CHANGED MAN.

2 CORINTHIANS 5. 17.


“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature ; old things are passed away ; behold, all things are become new.”

WE come now to the third subject, which I proposed to bring before you in my few opening sermons. I have already spoken to you of *Man's state as a sinner before God* ; also of *The great means of our recovery*, namely, the atonement of Christ. Our subject to-day will also be a very important



one ; namely, *Our need of a change of heart.*

In every Christian country, in every parish, in every congregation, there are two great divisions. We see *some* living altogether for this world. Their desires and feelings are all earthly. They have no love for God. They have no inclination for his service. Religion is a cold, dry, matter with them. They have no heart for it. It is all against the grain. It is a thing just put on for the Sunday, and then thrust aside, and forgotten. Talk to them of the world, of its business, or its pleasures, and you will find them ready enough, and eager enough, to dwell upon the subject. But talk to them of God, and of the things of God, and you soon see that they have no taste for it. They read God's word, perhaps,



because they know it to be their duty ; but they have no real appetite for such food. They go to church, and sit through the prayers, and listen to the sermon ; but they do not come here to pray earnestly ; they do not hearken to God's truth, as if they felt it to be His message to their souls. The little, trifling, perishing, affairs of the day occupy their attention, far more than the great concerns of eternity.

Such is the case with a very large class, not in this place merely, but in every place. I might say, such is the case with the great mass of men generally.

But there is *another class*, altogether different. With them religion is everything. It is the first, the chief, the leading object of their lives. They live in this world, but their

hopes are in heaven. Their hearts, their desires, their affections are set on things above. The service of God is not a mere task with them ; but it is their delight, and their greatest enjoyment. They are living for another world, and they already seem to have some foretaste of it. There is something in God's word, which seems to answer to the wants in their own souls, and they thankfully exclaim, This is truth ; we *feel* it, we *believe* it, we *know* it to be so ! To such persons Christ is very precious. They love to talk of Him ; and whilst they speak one to another on spiritual subjects, their very hearts burn within them.

Now, I ask you, do we not find this difference among men ? I am sure, you have observed it yourselves, and you have sometimes wondered,

perhaps, how it is that one man is so religious, and another so worldly; how it is that one man seems to find the greatest enjoyment in religion, and another finds none whatever; one man feels a real pleasure in doing God's will, and walking in his ways, and another only follows the bent of his own selfish inclination.

How can we account for this? What makes the difference? Is it that some men are born with better dispositions than others? It is true, they are so; but this will not account for the difference. No, this cannot be the reason, because we find some who are naturally ill-disposed, becoming thoroughly changed and altered characters. Is it then that some have greater advantages than others? No, it cannot be this either. For we often *see two persons brought up by the*

same parents, living in the same family, going to the same church, and sitting under the same gospel sound; and yet, perhaps, the one is a serious, earnest-hearted, spiritually-minded man, and the other is either an open sinner, or a cold formal Christian.

What is it then that makes the difference? It is nothing less than the grace of God in the heart—the power of God acting upon the soul. It is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Do not think, brethren, that I am giving merely my own opinion. I am declaring to you the truth of Scripture. Hear what St. Paul says in our text, “If any man be in Christ, (that is, if any man be a true Christian,) he is a new creature.” Can any language be stronger or plainer than this? And there are many other passages quite as strong. For in-

stance, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, St. Paul speaks of "putting off the old man, (or the old nature) which is corrupt, and putting on the new man," (or a new nature.) He describes it as a change *from darkness to light*. To the Philippians, he says, "ye were sometimes (or once upon a time) darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." Is there not a great difference between the darkness of night, and the bright light of day? This just describes the mighty change in a man's soul, when it becomes enlightened by God's grace.

It is spoken of too as *a change from enmity to love*. Our hearts are naturally turned away from God. "The carnal mind (says Scripture) is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Romans 8. 7. We know

what an enemy is. He is one who is utterly opposed to us, and hates us. And, what an idea does this give us of man's state by nature. He is not merely cold towards God, but actually opposed to Him! actually hating Him! "The carnal mind is enmity against God." Oh, what an awful thought! enmity to the best of Beings, the dearest of Friends! Enmity to Him, whose nature, and whose name is love! But so it is, and the more we look into our own hearts, the more we shall discover of this enmity lurking there. But God can subdue it by his grace. He can break down all our opposition, and turn our hatred into love. He has done so with many. He can do so with us. Thus St. Paul says to the Colossians, "And you that were sometimes alienated, and enemies in your mind

by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled."

But, perhaps, the strongest term used in Scripture to express this change, is that which speaks of it as *a change from death to life*. St. Paul writes thus to the Believers at Ephesus, "You hath God quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." Supposing a dead body was lying before you. You might speak to it, it would not hearken to you. You might sound the sweetest music in its ear, but all to no purpose. You might touch it, but it would not feel. This is but a true picture of man's state without the Spirit of God. The soul is lifeless, dead. As regards the things of this world, the mind is lively enough. It is full of quickness and energy, on all matters belonging to earth. All is life here. But when we come to

spiritual things, it is just the reverse. The mind is often dull and sleepy. It feels no interest in those concerns which are of such great importance. The pall of spiritual death covers the soul.

But there is such a thing spoken of in Scripture, as "passing from death unto life." There is such a thing as the soul being born again, and brought to life, created anew. The dead soul is roused. It begins to feel. The ear is opened to hearken, and the blind eyes to see. The mouth, which has been so long closed, breathes out a few words of earnest prayer. The man is alive. And now his great wonder is, that his soul can have so long been "sleeping the sleep of death."

Brethren, whose work is this? Is it a man's own doing? Do you think

a cold, stiff corpse could raise itself to life? No; neither can a dead soul. Is it the work of a minister? Can he do it? No; we preach plainly sometimes, and strongly; but the ear and the heart remain closed against the truth. Oh, no, we have not the power to change the heart. God only possesses it. He only, who gave life in the first instance, can give new life to the soul.

God is pleased to work in different ways, and to employ different means. Sometimes he awakens the sinner *suddenly*. He startles him, and shows him the danger he is in. He snatches him forcibly, as a brand from the burning. Generally, however, the change is more secret and gradual. God wins over the affections of the heart, one by one. He subdues by his grace *first* one sin, and then another. And

so he brings the man, almost without knowing it, to love Him and to follow Him. He works upon one person in the midst of health. Another He follows to the bed of sickness. The mind of one He draws with the bands of love; whilst He powerfully alarms the conscience of another. One man's heart is touched by a sermon. Another man is struck by something he reads in a book. A word from some religious friend is the means, which God employs to bring a third to himself. Wicked king Manasseh was brought to God, when a prisoner at Babylon. Paul, whilst hurrying on his way to Damascus, "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the people of God." The Thief was converted, as he hung upon the cross. And Lydia, by a sermon at Philippi. Each in a different way; but all by

one and the same almighty power. We must exclaim in every case, "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes !"

I wish now, my beloved brethren, to impress upon you all *the importance* of this change. Call it what you please—a new birth—a renewal of the heart—a putting off the old man, and putting on the new man—a new creation—a rising from the death of sin—a quickening to spiritual life. Take one, or all of these expressions, (and they are all borrowed from Scripture,) examine them well, and you will see, that they must mean some *great and entire change in the whole man* ; a change which must be wrought in every soul which hopes to reach heaven ; a change, too, which only the power of the Holy Spirit can *effect*. For the heart of man is so

entirely turned from God, that nothing can bring it back but his powerful grace. The restoring of a lost sheep, is the work of the Shepherd. He must seek it, and place it in the fold; or it will go on wandering further and further from home. Our natural feelings will do little for us, unless God works in our hearts. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing." We may *hear* the word, and *read* the word; but all to little purpose, unless the Spirit gives it power. "The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life."

Yes, this deep inward change of heart *is necessary for us all*; not for one or two, but for all of us; for "except ye be converted (says our Lord) ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 18. 3.

I tell the man who is living in

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drunkenness, the sabbath-breaker, the swearer, the scoffer at religion—I tell him, not that he must leave off a few evil habits, but that he must be changed within. If the water we use is bad, we may wipe the glass we drink out of, we may cleanse the cistern the water flows into, we may clear the pipes; but all to no purpose if the spring-head is impure. It is the sinner's *heart* that is in fault; and the heart must be renewed. Nothing short of this will do.


But I go further. I tell the gay, thoughtless man—the man who is amiable, perhaps, and kind, and loved by his companions, but who is unconcerned about the real matter of religion—I tell him, too, that he needs a change, a thorough change within.

I go further still. I would say to the outwardly moral man—the man

whose outward conduct is irreproachable, who comes regularly to church; nay, who even kneels at the Lord's Table; who is upright in all his dealings, and blameless as a friend and a neighbour—I would say to that man, Unless the Spirit of God works a change in your soul, you cannot enjoy God's service here, or dwell with him hereafter.

I would say to *you all*, as Jesus said to Nicodemus, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Here is a word for every one of us. I who preach, and you who hear, unless this inward change has been wrought in us, we are still far from the kingdom of God.

Now, what do we know of this change, my dear brethren? Perhaps, God's work is really going on in some of you. The thick mist may be clear-



ing away ; and you begin to see things differently, from what you once did. The Spirit of God is secretly at work in your soul, leading you to see new truths in his word which you never saw before, and to have new feelings which you never felt before. Truly, it may be said in your case, that “old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new.” A new life, as it were, is opening before you. You have a new prize to live for. New feelings, new desires, new hopes have sprung up within you. You are not what you once were. Well, if so, thank God for it ; and entreat him to carry on the work, which he has so graciously begun.

But there may be some to whom this is a strange doctrine ; some who, like Nicodemus, are ready to exclaim, “How can these things be ?” Your

hearts whisper within you, "If there is such a change as my minister speaks of, then I fear I am altogether a stranger to it; I know nothing of it."

Do not be satisfied to remain in ignorance. This is too serious a matter to be trifled with. Go home, and think it over. Pray that you may know something of it. There is, in the Prophet Ezekiel, a most gracious promise to encourage you. God says, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; a new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you." Ezekiel, 36. 25, 26, 27. Ask God to fulfil this promise to you. Pray to him in the words of David, "Create

in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." Psalm 51. 10.

SERMON V.

THE CHRISTIAN A HOLY MAN.

HEBREWS 12. 14.

“Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.”

I ALWAYS feel, brethren, that the most glorious and precious truth in the whole gospel, is that which tells us that there is salvation in Christ for every penitent sinner. This is the great key-note which, as a Minister of Christ, it is my highest joy to sound, But we must not stop here, else we should not be declaring to you “all

the counsel of God." Precious as this truth is, there are many others also very important to the true believer; as, for instance, that which is contained in our text, that *without holiness no man can see the Lord*.

In my three last sermons, I have preached to you on what I consider to be the great leading doctrines of the gospel—1st, Man's condition as a sinner—2ndly, The means which God has provided for his deliverance—and 3rdly, I urged upon you the absolute necessity of an inward change of heart. And now, to crown the whole, I wish to speak to you to day about HOLINESS. This is the true and un-failing mark, by which God's people are known. Many have a *good name* among men. They can speak well; and there is a fair outside. But only *those, whose life and conduct* are holy,

are really his; and without holiness, be assured, there is not one among us, who can have any hope of seeing God.

Let us then look into this doctrine. And may God help us, and direct our thoughts aright!

I. To begin with, let us inquire, *What is meant by holiness?*

We do not merely mean *morality*. Our outward conduct may be moral and respectable, and yet there may be no holiness. A heathen man, or an infidel, may be a moral man. A worldly person may be respectable. He may be kind, and liberal, and gentle. The world may hold him up as a pattern. He may be all this, without being a holy man.

Again, holiness does not consist in *the outward observances of religion*.

We know that a man may kneel down regularly, and repeat his prayers. He may never miss reading the Bible. We may see his face every Sunday, morning and evening, in the house of God. He may keep company with God's people. And yet he may know nothing of that holiness, which is spoken of in the text.

What is it then? It is all this, and much more. It is something higher, far higher, than what we have been speaking of. It is God's likeness in the soul of man. It is that purity of heart which makes a man love God, and delight to do his will. A holy man enjoys heavenly things. He loves what God loves, and hates what he hates. He is one whose conversation is in heaven. He minds not earthly things, but his heart and hopes are set on things above.

He daily lives upon Christ, and walks with God.

And, oh, how different is such a man's life from his, who lives for the world or for self! How different is he from the man, who just shapes his conduct according to the rules and maxims of his fellow men, and looks no higher. He is honest, because the world even condemns dishonesty. He is kind, because his brethren generally admire kindness. He observes the *outward* parts of religion, because other men observe them, and his conscience would not be easy if he neglected them. I say, how different is a life of holiness, of real inward holiness, to this! And this brings us back to that great spiritual change we were considering last Sunday. A really changed man will be a holy man. Aye, brethren, and if the

change is begun in you, it will be going on. The work of grace is a *growing* work. You will be making progress. You will be getting onward. Sin will be growing more hateful to you, and heaven more desirable in your eyes.

Supposing there was a little child who was very dear to one of you; should you not be concerned, if months and years passed, and it made no growth? And have not Christians reason to be concerned, if *they* make no growth in grace and holiness? Is it not a sure proof, that there must be something wrong within; that their souls cannot be in a healthy state?

If, indeed, there is a work of grace going on in your soul—a real, a living work—you will be daily overcoming some sin, daily gaining fresh knowledge, daily becoming more lowly

and humble, and daily finding out more beauty and preciousness in Christ. "The path of the just is as a shining light, that shineth *more and more* unto the perfect day."

It is sad to think how Christians lay and loiter in their spiritual course. We see them this year, much as they were a year ago, the same evil habits clinging to them, the same sins to be mourned over, the same cold dull heart complained of. All they can say is, they wish it were otherwise; they know it is not as it should be with them. How few there are, whose souls are in a really healthy state! How few *growing* Christians are there! How rare it is to see men making rapid strides on their way to heaven! How few of us are walking vigorously, earnestly, closely, and happily, with our God! Oh! let us

look into our hearts then, and see what it is that keeps us back. Let us find out the sin that besets and checks our course. Let us pray that the Holy Spirit may indeed dwell within us, and work powerfully in our souls.

II. But what does the Apostle say in our text *about the necessity of Holiness*? He says, that without it we shall not see God. Yes, it is utterly impossible that a man can see God, and be where He is, unless he is a holy man.

For, only consider *what God is*. He is not like one of us. He is a perfectly pure and holy Being. Sin is what He utterly abhors, not merely gross sin, which would even offend us, but every thing in the shape of sin is hateful in his sight. He is said to

be “of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.” How then can a sinful man dwell with God? How can you, or I, unless we are purified from sin? Can we carry our evil hearts, think you, and our worldly affections, and our unsubdued tempers, with us to heaven.

Again, consider *what heaven is*. It is a holy place, “wherein dwelleth righteousness.” And it is written, “There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.” Revelation 21, 27.

Consider, *who are in heaven*. The Lord himself! The spotless Lamb of God! The holy angels who have never sinned! The spirits of the just made perfect! Those holy saints and

servants of God, who have been redeemed by Christ, washed in his blood, and sanctified by his Spirit! These are the inhabitants of heaven. And who shall dare to hope that he can join that company, unless a mighty work has been wrought within him?

And, once more, consider *what will be our occupation*, our employment, our enjoyment in heaven. It will be to stand before the throne of God, and to serve Him day and night in his temple. It will be to sing the song of the redeemed, and to love and praise the Lord, through all eternity.

And now, I would just put it to you, whether holiness must not be absolutely needful for those, who would dwell where God is. If his word had not told us so, still we should know that it could not be

otherwise. Ah, brethren, who does not wish to go to heaven? Who does not desire, when this short life is over, to be an inhabitant of that blessed world? Who does not, in his thoughtful moments, dread the very idea of being shut out? Ask the most ungodly man in this, or any other, parish and he will tell you that he *hopes* there may be a place there for him. And yet, what madness! Supposing he could be admitted there, would he be happy? Would it be a place of enjoyment to *him*? How would he feel now, to be placed for one single day in a company where every person was a saint of God? Would he feel comfortable among them? Would their conversation, and their ways, suit him? Could he join heartily with them in prayer and praise? Could he find any pleasure

in talking with them of heavenly things? No, surely not. He would be forced to say, This is not the company for me. How utterly unfit then he must be for heaven! How impossible for him without holiness to find enjoyment there! Heaven would be no heaven to him. No, the very presence of a holy God, and of holy men, would make it a very hell to him! A place of anguish, instead of unspeakable enjoyment!

Let every ungodly man ponder this well. And never let him hope for heaven, unless he is seeking now for that holiness of heart and life, which alone can fit him for it.

I said just now that the life of holiness is a *growing* life. The child of God does not find out his sins all at once. He discovers them by degrees. First one sin is detected; then ano-

ther. It is long before he gets down to the depth of his own heart. But, if he is thoroughly in earnest, he will desire to attack every sin, and to drive it from his soul. His life will be one of continued warfare ; a daily struggle against sin ; a constant desire to get the mastery over himself. He longs to be more like his beloved Master, and desires that his whole life may be shaped according to that lovely pattern.

Would that we were pressing forward more earnestly in the path of holiness ! Would that we were more watchful over ourselves ! more careful, not in great things merely, but also in the little things of our everyday life, to please God, and to do his will ! Would that we spent more time in prayer, and in communion with God ; then should we be brighter,

holier, and happier Christians. Then would our light shine before men; they would see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven. Matthew 5. 16.

I believe, brethren, if we wish to make progress in holiness, the great secret is to be much with God; to draw very near to him; and to put ourselves often, as it were, in his very presence. For, I am quite sure of this, the clearer view we have of God's holiness, God's purity, the more clearly we shall see our own deformity. Just as it is when you leave a room that is well lighted, and go into the open air, the night always looks very dark. So it is with the child of God; when he has been in the presence of the Lord, within the veil as it were, in full view of the Father of lights—then, when he turns his eye inward upon his

own sinful self, sin appears very dark, very vile, very loathsome. And then it is that he is stirred up to greater holiness, and he earnestly prays that he may be made more like God.

God's perfect character is the model we should be ever aiming at, though, we cannot attain to perfection *here*. There will be always a body of sin clinging to us. We shall drag it about with us to the very last. Even holy Paul felt the clog and burden of indwelling sin, which made him exclaim, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

But how delightful the thought, that sin will soon be put down for ever! "God shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Sin stamps its mark on everything here. Sin turns all our happiness into sorrow, and makes this world a wilderness. In our

holiest moments, in our most holy employments, sin disturbs us. We find it everywhere, and most of all within—a secret poison in our hearts.

But there will be *no sin in heaven*. The moment we lay down these vile bodies of ours, we may say, Farewell, all my sin that has so long tormented me! Farewell lust for ever! Farewell my strife and envying! Farewell being ashamed of Christ! And does not this thought make even death sweet to us? We shall then be like Christ, for “we shall see him as he is.” What a poor weary life is ours here, compared with that which is before us! May we then be willing, and more than willing, even “*desiring*, to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better!” Philippians 1. 23.

SERMON VI.

THE FIG-TREE SPARED ; OR, ANOTHER YEAR OF GRACE.

LUKE 13. 8.

“ Lord, let it alone this year also.”

(PREACHED ON THE FIRST SUNDAY IN THE YEAR.)

THE first Sunday in a new year should be a very solemn and thoughtful day with us all. It is a kind of mile-stone in our journey onward. It is a loud call to us to reflect on the past, to look back on the years that are gone by, and to ponder well

if we are travelling in that path, which will bring us to heaven.

I think that I could hardly choose a more fitting portion of God's word for my new year's sermon, than that which I have read to you. It forms a part of a very interesting parable, which our Lord spoke in the hearing of the Jews.

Let us closely examine each part of the Parable, and try to gather from it all the instruction we can. And may He who spoke it, enable us to understand it !

In the sixth verse we read, that "a certain man had a Fig-tree planted in his vineyard, and he came, and sought fruit thereon, and found none." In countries where vines are grown, greater care is taken of the vineyard than any other part of the

farm. So that we may suppose the fig-tree in question was a very choice plant. It was placed in the most favourable spot, and probably no pains were spared in rearing it. Time after time, however, the owner passes by, and looks upon it, but finds it fruitless. The tree was there with its spreading branches, and its large green leaves, but no fruit.

What is to be done? Why, the owner says to the dresser of his vineyard, "Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none; cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" This was just what one might expect. All the care that had been taken with the tree was thrown away upon it. It was only an incumbrance to the soil, and fit to be rooted up and burnt.

Let us stop here, my brethren,

and learn a lesson. That fig-tree reminds us of our favoured condition. How is it, that we were not born in a heathen country? How is it, that we have lived hitherto in a land, where the light of Christian truth shines so brightly? Is it chance that our lot was cast here? Oh no, it is the great mercy of God, that has chosen for us so favoured a spot in his vineyard. And what, think you, does he expect of us? "To whom much is given, of him will much be required." The mere leaves of an outward profession will not satisfy Him. Mere blossoms will not do, beginning well, and promising fair. He looks deeper. He "comes seeking fruit." Aye, and his eye in an instant detects if it be real, genuine, ripening fruit. We sometimes see upon a fig-tree, hundreds of little stunted figs, which

make a fair show, but they come to nothing. The gardener knows well that they will never ripen.

Brethren, how is it with you? When God comes seeking fruit, does he find any? Each one of us has some special work to do. We were sent here, not merely to pass quietly through this world. We were sent here to be useful, to fulfil some important end. If masters, are we Christian masters? If parents, are we anxiously endeavouring to bring up our children for heaven? If servants, are we honest, obedient, faithful, serving for Christ's sake? If poor, are we rich in faith? Depend upon it, there is a work for each one of us to do. Are we doing it? Are we letting our light shine before men? Is it plain to all that we are Christ's servants? Are we living to God?

The owner, in the parable, found no fruit on his fig-tree ; and so he gave the order that it should be cut down. I tremble, my friends, lest so it should be with some of us—no fruit ! no holiness of life ! no zeal for God ! no earnestness about our souls ! I tremble lest God's patience should be tired out with some of us. I tremble for you who are living in sin, unpardoned, and unsaved. You are trying God's patience to the uttermost. You are daring him to strike the blow. Oh, in one moment he may strike it, and then you will be hurled into eternity. Say not in your heart, "I wish all men well ; I have done harm to no one." This is not the point. The fig-tree did no harm. There was no poison growing upon it ; no prickly thorns, instead of figs. No, its fault was that it was

fruitless, useless, a cumberer of the ground. Just so, every man who is not active in God's service, is a cumberer of the ground. What a mistake to suppose, that the Lord's work can be all done by his ministers ; and that it is enough for other men to spend their time as they will, to eat, drink, and be merry, to gain their livelihood, and to pass creditably through this world. Oh, has not each man and woman among us a soul to be saved, a God to be served, a hell to escape, and a heaven to win ? I leave it then to the conscience of each one of you, to say whether or not God might with justice give the order in *your* case, " Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground ?"

But, brethren, let us stop a moment, and admire the great mercy

and forbearance of our God. *We* have been spared. We might have been cut off long ago. But the Lord waiteth to be gracious. There is something which seems, as it were, to check his uplifted arm. His tender love still bears with us. How is this? If we go on with the parable, we shall find out the reason. How was it with the barren fig-tree? The dresser of the vineyard comes forward and intercedes with the owner : “ Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it : and if it bear fruit, well ; and if not, then, after that thou shalt cut it down.”

And is there not One, who, when we were sinning against God, and knew him not, and cared little for him, was perhaps all the while interceding for us? Who can tell the *value* of Christ’s prayers and interces-

sions for sinners? But for Him, you and I might now be in that place, where there is no repentance, no forgiveness. Our day of grace might be over; our time of punishment begun. Perhaps in the last few weeks, our heavenly Father may have seen in us enough, and more than enough, to lead him to "swear in his wrath, that we should not enter into his rest." But Christ has prayed for us, "Spare him yet a little longer:" "Let it alone this year also, till I dig about it and dung it, and if it bear fruit, well, and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down." You will observe, he does not pray, "Lord, let it never be cut down"—but, "Lord, not now: Lord, do not remove the careful dresser from it; do not withhold the dews; do not pluck up the tree." It is a solemn thought, that

this year may be with some of us our last year, our last season of trial, our last year of grace. If we bear fruit, well; but if not, then it will have been better for us never to have been born, and never to have been planted within God's vineyard.


But what can we make of those words, "Till I shall dig about it and dung it?" What does that mean? We know that a gardener who has a fruit tree which is not thriving, sometimes digs a deep trench round it, moves away the bad earth, and puts some rich mould or manure in its place, in order to make the tree more vigorous. And are we not sometimes choked up, and checked in our Christian growth, by the cares and pleasures of the world pressing *upon* us? Are we not earth-bound—*too tightly* held by the things of this

life? Then the Lord comes to us with his afflicting hand, and chastens us, not for his own pleasure, but for our profit. He loosens the hold which the world has upon us, by breaking off some of the roots which bind us to it. Does not the gardener take his pruning-knife, and cut the tree in order to make it more productive? And should we wonder that God deals so with us? Shall we be surprised if he cuts us sharply, and makes our very hearts bleed, and bows us down into the dust? It is in mercy that he does it. It is because he loves us. Would it be kinder to leave us alone? to let us walk on unchecked along the broad road which leadeth to destruction? If I mistake not, there are many on earth, and many more in heaven, who are ready to exclaim, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted: before I was afflicted I went astray."

4

Wonder not then, my dear brethren, if your heavenly Father should visit you with his chastening rod, in the next twelve months that are coming. Sure I am that he will not afflict us unless we need it. But, if affliction does come, let us receive it as from the Lord ; and let us earnestly pray that it may be blest and sanctified to us. “ If we bear fruit, well — but if not ” — oh then he will give us over, and we shall perish everlastingly. Remember, when once a man is cut down by the stroke of death, his lot is fixed for ever. “ In the place where the tree falleth, there it shall lie.”

Awake then, I beseech you. There is no time for doubting. Now is the accepted time. Begin the new year by leading a new life. Examine yourself well, and see how your soul stands with God. Are you accepted?



Are you saved? There should be no uncertainty in this matter. Heaven or hell is wrapped up in the question. Everlasting happiness or misery hinges upon it. A mistake about your soul is a mistake for eternity. Sit down this day, and think. Enter into your closet, and bring the subject before God. And may he enable you henceforth to give him your whole and undivided heart!

And now, beloved, I commend you to God. My prayer for you all is, that this year may be a year of blessing to you. May each day bring you nearer to God, and nearer to heaven. May each day find you "growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ!"

SERMON VII.

THE GREAT HEALER.

JOHN 5. 6.

“ Wilt thou be made whole ? ”

OUR blessed Lord, during those few years that he was upon earth, very often went into the town of Jerusalem. On one occasion, as he was passing through the streets of the city, his eye rested on a crowd of people. The fact was, there was a certain pool of water there, which *was noted* for curing different kinds

of disease. And those who were lying around it were sick persons, who had all come there in the hope of being healed.

There was something remarkable about this pool ; for, it appears, that it had no power of healing except at certain seasons, when an angel went down, and troubled the water ; “ who-soever then first, after the troubling of the water, stepped in, was made whole of whatever disease he had.”

We are told, that around this spot “ there lay a multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water.”

But our Lord’s pitying eye rested especially on one man. Perhaps he was the most wretched of them all. Perhaps his anxious countenance bespoke his earnest desire to be healed. He had been long afflicted. For

thirty and eight years he had scarcely known what ease and health were. He had tried perhaps many remedies, but all had failed. He had heard of these waters, and he had come to them as his last hope. But again, and again, he had been disappointed. He had seen others, who were stronger and more fortunate than himself, stepping into the pool just at the proper moment; but there he lay, day after day, without any one to pity him, or to help him.

But now a Person, a perfect stranger, passing by, stops, and with a look of unusual tenderness, addresses this poor sufferer; "Wilt thou be made whole?" Why, this was just the thing he wanted—just the thing he had been longing for, for years—to be made whole! He little knew who it was that spoke to him. To

all appearance, it was a man like himself. He knew not, that it was God in the likeness of man. There could not be a moment's doubt in his mind, as to the answer he should give. He was nearly worn out by his complaint; and the very offer of a cure was cheering indeed to him. "Jesus saith unto him, Arise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole."

Thus I have given you a short account of what led our Lord to ask the question in our text, "Wilt thou be made whole?" And surely it is a most striking question. Do you not almost wish, that He, who stood at the pool of Bethesda, might enter this house of worship, and stand in the midst of us, and put this same question to each of us? Brethren,

he is now in the midst of us. "There standeth one among you whom ye know not." He is in this very assembly. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name (he says) there am I in the midst of you." And he seems to say to every one here, "Wilt thou be made whole?"

And now, I ask, what are your feelings, with this offer before you? Is there not a little hesitation with some? I know there is. And how shall we account for it, that there are so many of us at this moment unhealed, and unsaved? Aye, and willing to continue unhealed; content to remain just as they are? Is it that the salvation of Christ has not been offered to us? Is anything wanting on the part of God? Is it that the gospel with all its healing, *pardoning* power, has not been pro-

claimed? No, brethren, no : the truth is, there is in each of us *naturally* an unwillingness to receive Christ, and to be saved by him. It is true, in one sense, we all wish to be saved. The very idea of being lost for ever, must be painful to every man. But what we wish is to be saved each one in his own way! to be saved in our sins; in our worldliness! to be saved without stooping before the cross of Christ; without confessing our guilt, and pleading for mercy! to be saved without crucifying self; without having our hearts changed; and without the necessity of holiness! to be saved, in short, *without Christ!*

This is the plain truth, brethren—we wish to be saved, all of us; but many of us are not willing to be *saved in God's way*. It is against the gospel of Christ, against the gospel

remedy, that our hearts rebel. Tell a man in his natural, unawakened state, that he must be a moral man—that he must be regular in the outward things of religion—that he must be sober, and upright, and honest—he will agree to all this, and not say a single word against it. But tell him a little more—tell him that he must be changed within; that he must come as a sinner to Christ; that nothing less than the Saviour's blood can cleanse his soul; that the world must be given up; that every sin must be forcibly put aside, if he would win heaven; that his whole heart must be given to the Lord; that the Holy Spirit must dwell within his soul—tell him all this, and “immediately he is offended!” He cannot bear these doctrines—these humbling, searching, solemn truths. Religion

now becomes too real for him. It touches him in the tenderest parts ; and he rejects it.

And is not this just what the Scripture leads us to expect ? “ The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God ; for they are foolishness to him : neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” 1 Corinthians 2. 14. “ Ye *will not* come to me, that ye might have life.” John 5. 40.

Here then is the great difference between the disease of *the body*, and the disease of *the soul*. When the body is diseased, a man feels it ; he earnestly desires to be cured. But when his soul is diseased, he feels it not. It does not concern him. He is not anxious to be healed. Nay, when the very remedies which God

in his love has provided, are set before him, he rejects them, and puts them from him.

Yes, most true it is, that man in his natural state is absolutely unwilling to be healed, as regards his soul. The ministers of Christ cannot persuade him. They may preach the gospel to him ; but they cannot *make* him receive it. Even the Bible, God's own word, is not enough. God himself must speak to the heart. He must open the heart, and make the heart feel. He must arouse the sinner by his own almighty power, and show him that he needs a Saviour.

God grant that some who now hear me, may be thus convinced, and thus converted. Speak, Lord, to the hearts of thy servants ; and then they shall be "willing in the day of thy power !"

Let us now dwell for a few minutes on the nature of that glorious cure, which Christ can give to the soul. When he says, "Wilt thou be made whole," what can he do for us?

1st. When Christ makes us whole, *he washes away all our guilt.* If we were to be told, that this very night we should be called to our great account, would not the recollection of many past sins rush in upon our minds? And suppose these sins, every one of them, should be still unpardoned, and that guilt should at this moment be lying at our door, how fearful would be the thought of meeting God, and of standing in his holy presence! Dear brethren, if we die unforgiven, we must die unsaved. Oh, then, is it nothing to have these sins entirely blotted out? Is not that welcome news to your soul, which

tells you, that there is a "fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness?"

I can fancy some one saying, "If the Saviour were now on earth, we would travel miles; we would go through difficulties; we would seek him with eagerness; if only we could see him, and fall down at his feet, and beseech him to pardon and heal us. And then indeed we would be thankful, if only we could hear from his own lips that blessed assurance, "Thy sins be forgiven thee; go in peace."

Ah, here is our unbelief! We read, that Christ pardoned men *formerly*, and we believe it. But we are slow to believe that he can as easily pardon *now*. And why not? Had the Saviour more power *on earth*, than he has now that he is seated at the right hand of his Father

in heaven? Or, is that word no longer true which says, that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin?"

Away then with our doubts, our unbelief. Come to this Saviour *now*. It may be too late this evening—too late to-morrow. Come to him *now*. It is a *present* pardon he offers you. Come to him just as you are, a poor debtor with nothing to pay, and nothing to offer: and be willing to receive from Christ all you need to make you happy.

Is there not something delightful to you in the idea of forgiveness—acceptance with God—a full, a present salvation—the being able to look up to Him, as a God at peace with you? Now, all this Christ offers to bestow upon you. And "blessed" indeed "is the man whose unright-

eousness is forgiven, and whose sin is covered." Psalm 32. 1.

2ndly. When Christ heals, *he changes the whole man*. Think of that poor sufferer, of whom we have been speaking. Was there not a great change in his body, when Jesus had cured him? For thirty and eight years he had been helpless, lying upon his bed, bowed down with his infirmity. But now he is able to walk, to use his limbs, and to shew such signs of health, that all who knew him could not but acknowledge that a great cure had been wrought. And if the Lord cures *us*, we shall be changed characters, altered men; and we shall lead such new lives, that the world around us may plainly see, that a work of grace has been wrought in us; for "if any man be in Christ, he is a new

creature ; old things are passed away ; behold all things are become new."

But, 3rdly, the pardoned sinner receives from Christ *grace to enable him to abstain from sin in future*. He delivers him, not only from the condemnation which his sin deserved, but also from the power of sin. The Gospel is called "the law of liberty." But it is not liberty *to sin* : it is liberty *from sin*, deliverance from its power, a release from its cruel bondage.

Mark this, for it is very important. Sin, my friends, is our ruin. And if we would enjoy a peaceful walk with God, and a happy prospect of heaven as our home, there must be a constant untiring struggle against sin ; a daily effort to overcome it ; and that, not

in our own strength, but in that strength which we receive from Christ; for “without me (he says) ye can do nothing.”

If sin then is our enemy, how sad it is to see men trifling with it! If you were to see one of your children playing with poison, how it would alarm you! How you would lift up your voice to warn him! And if he would not hearken, how eagerly would you seize the deadly drug, and snatch it from him! Oh parents, keep your children from sin, and give them right views of its danger.

And you, my dear brethren, who have fairly entered upon the journey of life, grown men and women, beware of the tempting, enticing nature of sin. Oh, it can dress itself up in deceitful colours. It can dart its

venom into our hearts, whenever it sees that the heart is unguarded, and open to receive it.

Yes, Christ would have us holy. And he can make us holy, for this was the great end of his coming, that he might “redeem us from all iniquity.”

But there is yet one more blessing which the Saviour bestows, when he heals the sinner's soul; and that I must not pass by. Not only does he wash away every sin; not only does he change the whole man, and give him strength to lead a holy life; but

4thly, He *clothes him in his own righteousness*. The believer's holiness at best is but very imperfect. In himself he is sadly deficient. But he is complete in Christ. God looks upon him as righteous for his Son's

sake; for Christ was “made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” 2 Corinthians 5. 21.

Brethren, have you this robe of righteousness upon you? Or are you trusting in any goodness of your own? Believe me, your own righteousness is as filthy rags. It will never cover you. You are safe only in the righteousness of Christ.

Now, before I leave you, let me once more affectionately urge upon you the great question of our text, “Wilt thou be made whole?” Remember, Christ puts the question. He does not put it to all in a *general way*, but to *each separately*. He seems to take each one of us aside, and say to us, one by one, “Wilt thou—and wilt thou—be made whole?”

Am I addressing any one to-day,

who, when he looks back on the past, grieves to think of misspent sabbaths, heartless prayer, warnings slighted, the workings of conscience stifled ; who remembers knocks after knocks at the door, which he would not open ? Is *your* case hopeless ? No, even to you our Lord speaks once more with a voice of tenderest mercy, and says, “ Wilt thou be made whole ? ” This day I have a message to you from Him. His arms are still open, if you are willing to fly to them. No man can ever say, that it is the Saviour who rejects the sinner, but the sinner who rejects the Saviour.

Yes, it is to you, whoever you may be, to whom the Saviour speaks. This house of prayer may indeed be to you a Bethesda, a “ house of mercy.” Have you often come to the Lord’s house, and gone away none

the better, like the poor man who had laid for years by the pool's side? May your Saviour's kind and gracious words reach your ears, and your heart. Your cure may begin to-day.

Now, when you go home, try to turn to some good account what you have heard. Ask God to touch your heart, and give you his Holy Spirit. And let that short prayer which you will find in the 17th chapter of Jeremiah, be yours, "Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved."

SERMON VIII.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HEAD-BELIEF AND SAVING FAITH.

JOHN 6. 64.

“There are some of you that believe not.”

ALTHOUGH I am speaking to a congregation of professing Christians, and although I trust there are many among you who are truly Christians in heart, yet I dare not hide from you the truth—I dare not conceal it from myself—that “there are some of you that believe not.”

I earnestly pray that the Holy

Spirit may be with us, whilst we consider these three points :—

- I. What it is to believe.
- II. Why it is that some believe not.
- III. The portion of all unbelievers.

First, WHAT IS IT TO BELIEVE? The gospel of Christ proclaims to us two great facts. One is, that man has sinned, and thus shut himself out of heaven. The other is, that God has provided a Saviour, and thus has opened the kingdom of heaven to all true believers.

We will say nothing about those, who entirely reject these truths. But how differently are they looked upon by those even, who profess to receive them ! The great mass of people do not for a moment doubt that the *gospel* is true. They have a great

respect for the word of God. They believe that man has sinned, and that a Saviour has appeared on earth. But then it has no effect upon them. They grieve not for that sin: they love not that Saviour. They believe that there is a hell; but they show no anxiety to escape it. They believe that there is a heaven; but they are so content with this present world, that they have no longing for one to come.

Now, do such persons really believe? They have *a kind* of faith; but it is cold, dead, and fruitless. Its seat is not in the heart, and it is therefore worthless in God's sight. A man may have such a faith as this, and yet remain unchanged. The devils have such a faith; but it only makes them tremble, for they cannot love God.

I will try to explain this. Supposing one of us hears of some family in the very deepest distress, in a neighbouring parish. He believes it. He does not doubt one single fact that is told him. It may for a moment draw tears from his eyes. He may talk of it. And yet he may *do nothing* to relieve the sufferers. He may not move a step for them. His heart and his hands may remain closed against them.

But how is it with another? He hears the very same account. He believes it too. His feelings are moved, and his heart also is touched. He exclaims, "What can I do for these unhappy sufferers? I will help them. A portion of what the Lord has given me, I will share with them." The one believes the report; and that is

all. The other believes it, and acts upon it.

And now, can you not plainly see the difference between a dead, barren, faith, and believing with the heart. The one leaves a man much where it found him—asleep. The other makes him active, earnest, anxious. But hear what St. James says, “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man *say* he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith (such a faith as I have just been describing) save him? If a brother or a sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye filled and warmed; notwithstanding, ye give them not those things which are needful for the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.” James 2. 14—17.

As it is in worldly things, so is it also in spiritual things. St. Paul says, "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." Romans 10. 10. When the heart feels its own sinfulness; when the soul discovers that it is in danger; when the Spirit of God awakens the heart, and shows the sinner that he is lost—then, oh, how differently does he feel about a Saviour! The gospel has quite a new sound for him. It proclaims deliverance; and that is what he wants; deliverance for the lost! deliverance *for him!* deliverance for "the chief of sinners!" He not only believes that man has sinned; but he feels and knows that *he himself* has sinned; and he sees that Christ has died for him. He "loved me, and gave himself for me!" Galatians 2. 20.

I do trust that this is a state of

mind, which some of you can understand, from having felt it yourselves. The glad tidings of the gospel have perhaps been welcome to you. When sin has been spoken of, it has touched you sharply. Every word has probed you to the very heart. It has seemed to say to you, "Thou—thou art the man." And then with what joy you have drank in those precious truths, which tell you there is a way of escape opened to you—deliverance for the mourning captive—pardon for the penitent—salvation for the ruined! Thus you have put away every other hope. You have flung aside, one after another, every prop on which you once leant; and you have taken Christ as your only refuge.

This, brethren, is faith. This is what we mean by believing in Christ. It is to grasp his offered salvation, and

to make it ours. It is to “lay hold of eternal life;” and to love Christ with all our hearts. “Unto you therefore which believe He is precious.”

But I must not forget that there may be many now before me, to whom these feelings are as yet unknown. “There are some of you that believe not.” Let us come, then, to

The 2nd point, and inquire, WHY IT IS THAT SOME BELIEVE NOT.

Perhaps it is that some have not heard the gospel. No, brethren, this is not the case. No man among us can plead this excuse. If you never heard it before, you have heard it to-day—now.

Perhaps it is then that some of you have no learning—you cannot understand these things. No, it is not *learning* that will bring a man to

Christ. Sometimes the least learned have the most faith, the truest love to their Saviour. "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith?" James 2. 5.

What is it then? I must follow you closer home, if I want to find out the true reason; and then perhaps I shall discover that it is *sin* which keeps you from believing in Christ. There is some deeply-rooted sin—some heart-sin—which stains, and poisons, and closes up your soul.

It is said that a celebrated Preacher was once addressing his congregation; and whilst he was speaking to them, the sun shone brightly on his face. And lifting up his hand, he exclaimed, "You see that this little hand even is quite sufficient to hide from me the bright rays of the sun. And so, in like manner, sin, even a little sin, is quite

enough to hide from my soul the light of God's countenance."

Here then is one reason why you have no faith, no comfortable reliance on Christ. It is *because you love sin*. Be assured, as long as you indulge in sin, Christ will be a stranger to you. You, in fact, put him away. You thrust him from you.

It is very painful to think how people deceive themselves. We have sometimes known a man, who has been living a careless and ungodly life. He is laid down upon a death-bed. His minister comes and reads to him, and prays by his bed-side. We see, however, no anxiety, no deep repentance, no bitter contrition,—in short, no saving change in him. And yet perhaps he may *seem* to die happily. There may be something like a peaceful smile to be seen on his cold countenance. And

then his friends think that all is well ! Oh, how Satan blinds men ! He sometimes keeps them slumbering to the very last. There is a fearful word written in the Psalms, concerning the wicked, directly to this very point ; “ There are no bands in their death.” Psalm 73. 4.

But it is not only the love of sin, which may be keeping you from believing in Christ. There is *the love of the world*, which also keeps back some. If Satan cannot tempt them to actual sin, he entwines the world around their hearts. “ The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them.” 2 Corinthians 4. 4.

Another reason is that *you do not*

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pray. You don't ask for faith. Now faith is a direct gift from God. "Unto you (St. Paul says) it is *given* to believe." Philippians 1. 29. No man ever yet believed in Christ truly and savingly, without having received that power directly from above. Naturally our hearts are in a state of rebellion against God; and until the precious seed of grace is sown within us, we have no power, and no inclination, to lay hold of Christ.

Brethren, do any of you at this moment feel that you have no real faith? Do you envy those who have it? Do you long to possess it? Oh, then, go and ask God to give it to you. Try this, and you will find that God is ready—aye quite willing—to bestow it, in answer to your prayer.

And what comfort is like that *which* the broken and contrite heart

feels, when a man truly believes on the Son of God? A dead weight is removed from his soul. He believes that, through the merits of his Saviour, his sins are taken away, and blotted out for ever. And now he can rest in that Saviour's love, with the same undoubting confidence, with which a child rests in his mother's arms.

I have spoken of faith, and of the reasons why some of you possess it not. I must now hasten to say a few words,

3rdly, About THE PORTION OF ALL UNBELIEVERS. And most wretched is that portion even now. Without faith we have nothing to stand on, nothing to hold by; our hearts have no eternal home. It is written, "He that believeth not is condemned already." John 3. 18. How fearful—

condemned already! The sentence of death, as it were, already written out against him!

The sin of rejecting the Saviour is thought little of by the world. They never dream of it. But in God's sight it is the *sin of sins*. The man who goes on carelessly committing it (we have seen), is "condemned already." And why? "Because he hath not believed on the name of the only-begotten Son of God." It has been remarked,* that this sin—the sin of thinking lightly of Christ—of turning the back upon God's unspeakable gift—of refusing to receive, love, and obey his beloved Son—is the sin which seems, like Aaron's rod, to swallow up every other. It is *the master-sin*, the one great sin, on which the charge will be drawn out against *the ungodly* at the day of judgment.

* See Winslow on the Atonement.

It is a sin too—and let me press this home upon you, for it is an awful truth—it is a sin, of which the very devils have never been guilty. To them the Saviour has never been sent. Before their eyes the cross has never been lifted up. Along their gloomy habitations no tidings of redeeming mercy have ever echoed.

Not to believe then ; to reject the Saviour ; and to die in that state ; is to pass to the judgment guilty of a sin, which Satan himself cannot be charged with !

And, oh, if we could take a glance at the unbeliever's state in the world to come, how fearful would it be ! He has rejected the *only* way of salvation ; and “there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.” There remains “the

worm that never dies," and "the fire that is never quenched : " " outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth : " " and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever, and they have no rest day nor night." Hebrews 10. 26, 27. Mark 9. 46. Matthew 8. 12. Revelation 14. 11.

Such is the portion of those, who believe not with the heart on God's dear Son. Think not that we take any pleasure in dwelling on so awful a subject. Oh no. We speak of it, because we *must* speak ; because we feel a concern for your souls ; and because we would snatch some of you from the burning, if we could.

Let me then ask you, with all the affection and earnestness of an Ambassador for Christ, " Why will ye die ? " Will you reject Christ, and be for

ever banished from his presence? Or will you receive him as your Saviour, and your Lord?

It is a blessed thought that heaven's gate is not yet closed upon any of us. The way is still open—the way of escape—the way of mercy and of happiness. But there is no time to trifle; not a moment to be lost! The voice of Christ is now pleading with you: but it will soon, perhaps very soon, cease to plead with you. To-day, if you will hear that voice, harden not your heart.

I would give you one word of caution. You may have very clear views concerning Christ, and yet be none the nearer to Him. The question is not, Do we know these things? but, Do we realize them? Believe me, it is not enough to have these truths stored up in our *heads*. They must

have a place in our *hearts*. Sin must not only be acknowledged, but *felt*. Christ must not only be known as a Saviour: He must be *applied to*. We must, each one of us, have a *personal interest* in his salvation. His blood must be sprinkled on our hearts.

Oh that God would remove every hindrance out of our way, and make us “willing in the day of his power” —willing to be his—willing to be saved—willing to be eternally happy! Oh that we would, one and all, surrender our hearts to Him, and say to Him, “Lord, at any cost I will be thine. Thy people shall be my friends and companions. Thy cross shall be my hope. Thy blood shall be my remedy. Thy law shall be my delight. And thine abode my dwelling-place, my home for ever! Lord I believe. Increase my faith!”

SERMON IX

THE SIN OF NEGLECTING GOD'S SALVATION.*

HEBREWS 2. 3.

“ How shall we escape, if we neglect so great
salvation ? ”

WE, who are living in a Christian country, are in a very different condition from any other men in the world ; for we have had salvation placed before us. Now, the salvation

* The substance of this Sermon was borrowed from one by the Rev. H. Melville, on the same text.

which God has offered to us is not a thing to trifle with. It is not a mere speculation, that we are to *talk* about. It is not a matter which concerns the head only, and on which we are to show our learning, or our want of learning. It is not a plaything, that we may take up, and put down, as we please. No, my dear brethren, it is something very solemn and important; it is something that concerns our eternal welfare. God has made a most gracious offer to every man, woman, and child; namely, to save him from eternal death, and to give him everlasting life. The great wonder is, that men are not more interested, and anxious, about this offer. One would have supposed, that their whole thoughts would be taken up with it. Instead of that, for the *most* part it just lies unheeded at

their feet. Some trample upon it, and despise it. Some take it up for a moment, and then throw it aside again. Some pass it by, as if it did not concern them. And some (alas how few !) prize it as their choicest pearl, seize upon it, and accept it with the utmost thankfulness.

Now, it is because I feel what an unspeakably solemn thing it is to have this offer made to us, that I have chosen the words before us, as a question, which I would wish to put to each one of you this day ; “How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?”

We all know that man has sinned, and by his sin has forfeited God's favour, and shut himself out of heaven. This then is his condition—ruined beyond all power to recover himself ! Such being the case, could

any scheme have been planned, greater and more glorious, for the rescue of a lost world, than that which the gospel of Christ lays open to us?

In order to see *the greatness* of this salvation, let us seriously consider these four things.

1st. *Who has procured it for us?* God could have employed a Moses, or an Abraham, to be our Deliverer. It would have been an easy thing for him to have sent down an angel from heaven. He could have clothed him with our flesh, and made him take our nature upon him. He might have said, "This is my beloved Messenger, in whom I am well pleased." "This is the Lamb, which I have provided." "Behold your Deliverer!" This angel might have remained for a season upon earth. He might have

become "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." He might have "given his back to the smiters." He might have been "led like a lamb to the slaughter." He might have shed his blood for sin. But what value would there have been in that blood? Could it have atoned for a world's sins? Could it have paid off the debt of years? Could it have bought up all that man had lost by his transgression? No, brethren, no. It needed more to redeem even a single soul than this. There must be something more valuable than a man or an angel could pay. Thus it was, then, that God "spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all." Christ, the second person in the holy Trinity, the eternal Son of God, was moved with compassion for the ruin, which sin had brought upon this

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world; he took upon himself our nature; endured our curse; and died our death. Thus, you see, God became man, and bore all the wrath which sin had provoked. Just look at the Cross, and consider that our sins were laid upon that Being, who hung there in all the weakness of a suffering, dying man; and yet that Being is none other than THE EVER-LASTING GOD! Though he seemed for a time to be mastered by the wicked cruelty of men, yet, by a single word uttered from that tree, he could in an instant have scattered his enemies, and crushed them into nothing. And when we think of the greatness of our Deliverer, does it not prove to us, how vast must be that salvation which he purchased? To neglect it, then, is to throw away our only hope; and to scorn the very

mercy of God. Oh, "how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

Having then spoken of the greatness of Him who became our Deliverer, I want you to observe next, *the greatness and completeness of the deliverance* which he has provided for us. We might be quite sure, that what God undertook would be thoroughly performed. And truly, the more we look into the great scheme of redemption, the more we see its grandeur and completeness. The sins of a whole world were laid upon Christ; so that every sinner might be pardoned, if only he would believe in that Saviour. The guiltiest among us dares not deny that salvation is placed within *his* reach. Mercy stoops down to the wants of the very lowest.

The heaviest burden of the penitent can be taken off, for the Saviour hath borne it for him. Thus the believer receives pardon, and avoids punishment: but more than this, he is accepted by God, and made happy for ever.

And is not this indeed a “great salvation,” which so completely provides for every want of helpless, guilty man? What then, if we neglect it? Is it not to be needy, and yet to put from us that—that one thing—which just meets our need? Why, it is as if we chose deliberately that our debt should remain unpaid; that we would go hence without one single plea against the wrath of an offended God; we dare death, and meet it with its sting untaken away; we rush forward to an eternity of misery! If such then is our deliverance—so great, so

complete—how shall we escape if we neglect it?

The third thing I would have you consider is, the greatness of Him who *puts us in possession* of this deliverance. Here is a “great salvation,” purchased for me by a great Redeemer. But something more is needed. I must accept it. It must become mine. And how can this be? Why, in the first place, I must feel my need of it. There must be a feeling of earnest desire awakened in my heart, to lay hold of this salvation. And this can only be brought about by the power of the Holy Ghost. He alone can make a guilty sinner anxious to accept this redemption: for nothing less than his almighty grace can arouse the slumberer, shew him the danger he is in, and lead him to the Saviour.

If you refuse salvation then, you resist the strivings of the Holy Spirit—you resist God himself!

And, my friends, I feel sure of this, that the most thoughtless and careless person among us, has not arrived at his present state of mind, without fighting against the checks and strivings of the almighty Spirit. You have at times felt that all was not right; and then, to keep off that anxiety and alarm which were rising up in your mind, you have stifled and smothered the pleadings of God within you. Is it not so? We know it is.

You, for instance, who are young and thoughtless, whose God is pleasure, and whose home is the world we would not believe you, if you told us that you never had an hour of easiness about your soul. When

have been alone, or when you have been with others, have you never heard a silent whisper, which has told you that you *may* be found wanting? When you have heard of the sudden death of a companion, or when you have seen a funeral pass by, or when you have been laid on a sick bed, have you never found it difficult to keep down your fears? Have you never felt a consciousness that you needed a thorough change of heart and conduct: and there has been a struggle before you could quite get rid of that feeling? If you were to tell us that such a feeling never came across you, I say we could not believe you. We know better; for we know you have a conscience, and that the Holy Spirit strives with that conscience. No, my friends, you are not let alone by God.

Sure I am, that every young man who is the slave of his corrupt passions, has often a misgiving, lest the end of these things should be the loss of his soul. Sure I am, that many a young woman, who spends her money in vanity, and thinks only of her dress, is sometimes startled by the thought, that her apparel may soon be a shroud, and a winding sheet. Sure I am, that the man who labours only to be rich, and thirsts for money, is now and then aghast with fear, lest he should be poor through eternity. Sure I am, that those who neglect the means of grace, who, when invited to the Lord's table, continually refuse,—sure I am, that as they turn their backs on the ordinance, they cannot do so without some little consciousness that all is not as it should *with them*. Yes, brethren, all—e

the most thoughtless—have at times their convictions. God works in their hearts, and urges them to accept his salvation. How then shall they escape who neglect it?

There is one more consideration that I shall place before you, to show the greatness of this salvation. It is this—that *on rejecting or accepting it depends our EVERLASTING happiness or misery*. This is a most tremendous thought—my everlasting, eternal, welfare hangs upon this! If I accept the gospel offer, Heaven becomes my inheritance, where there is “fulness of joy” for evermore. If I reject it, Hell becomes my portion, and there the worm never dies, the fire shall never be quenched. What is our life here? It is but a few short years, and then comes a time that shall

never, never end. Oh, bear this in mind, and see that you are not selling your eternal happiness at the price of a little momentary enjoyment.

I have now tried to set before you the greatness, and importance, of the salvation offered to each one of us ; and, therefore, the certainty of our ruin if we refuse it. St. Paul asks in our text, how those can expect to escape who neglect it ?

And what answer are you prepared to give to this question ? Perhaps your first thought is, " We will pay attention to the gospel by-and-by." I would warn you that this answer comes from Satan. If he cannot persuade us to give up thoroughly, and for ever, all concern for our soul, then he tries another scheme. He says, " Put it off a little while."

“To-morrow will do.” “To-morrow you can turn to God.” But, alas! to-morrow comes, and the ties of the world are just as strong, and sin is just as enticing, and the heart is just as hard as ever; nay, every day that it is kept from God, it becomes harder and harder.

Or, perhaps, you have got another answer to the question. Perhaps you are ready to say, you allow the truth of the gospel; you are not one who thinks lightly about it; you would not for the world hinder any one from being in earnest about his soul; you would rather encourage him. But stop. Look a little closer into the question before us. It is not, “How shall we escape, who disbelieve, deny, or oppose, so great salvation?” but, “How shall we escape, if we *neglect* it?” It is *neglecting* it—just

treating it with coldness or carelessness—giving attention to other things in preference—not being openly unbelieving, but being indifferent—this is what the Apostle speaks of; and this is quite enough to ruin a man's soul for ever.

Among the lost hereafter we shall find, I believe, but few who *openly* rejected Christianity, when it was placed before them, but few who were bold and daring enough to own themselves altogether unbelievers. But there will be millions, whose sad tale will be, that they *intended* to accept the gospel, but *delayed* to do so. They were fully convinced of its truth, but they never seized hold of it for themselves.

Oh ! let us take care, “lest a promise being left us of entering into rest, any of *us* should seem to come short of it !”

My dear brethren, there is not one of you, to whom salvation is not offered. Oh, let it not be said of you, "You knew of this salvation, you talked of it, you thought of it, but after all you refused to accept it. Words will not save you. Good intentions will be worth nothing. It is only Christ, heartily accepted; Christ firmly laid hold of; Christ received into the very heart—this, this alone, is salvation. God has provided it. Christ has purchased it. The Holy Spirit urges our acceptance of it. How then should we escape if we neglect it?"

SERMON X.

THE CHRISTIAN SAFE AND HAPPY.

LUKE 10, 20.

“ Rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.”

THE gospel of Christ, my dear brethren, is able to make you happy. It can remove every sorrow from your mind, and can give you the purest, the most solid, joy.

But is there no other way of happiness than this? Are God's people *the only* happy people? Perhaps

some one of you who is living a life of worldliness will tell me, that you are very happy as you are. I quite believe you. I know that a man may be happy, though he is unfor-given. Your very sins may give you pleasure. Your forgetfulness of a world to come may make this world delightful to you. No sorrow may cloud your brow. No tear may fill your eyes, no scruples may disturb you.

Oh yes, you may be happy—happy in your unconverted state — happy just as you are. Satan may be folding you in his arms, and you may say to the Minister of Christ, Disturb me not.

But ah, is not this just the saddest thing of all ; that you should be happy whilst you are a child of wrath ; that you should smile, and eat, and drink,

and be merry, and sleep soundly, when this very night your soul may be in hell? Happy, at enmity with God! Happy, whilst unpardoned! Oh, what an awful happiness is this!

The gospel of Christ tells us of another happiness. It calls upon us to rejoice, not in the world, not in sin, but in the Lord. These are the words of Christ, "Rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven."

Let us inquire into the great truth, contained in these words; that the names of all God's people are written in heaven.

And what does this mean? We cannot suppose that God has actually a book, in which are written down all the names of his servants. *Our Lord* speaks here, as He of

does, in a way suited to our understandings. We know what it is for the father of a family to have all his children's names in some book. We know what it is for the soldiers of an earthly king to be registered. Now, our heavenly Father and King knows, not only all those who *profess* to be his children and soldiers, but those who really and truly *are* so. He has known it from all eternity. And therefore, it is said, that their names are written in his book.

This expression is often used in Scripture. Let us take some passages in the New Testament. In Philip-
pians 4. 3, St. Paul speaks of those who had "laboured with him in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow-labourers, whose *names are in the book of life.*" Again in Hebrews 12. 23, he speaks of "the

general assembly, and church of the first-born, which are *written in heaven.*" In the Book of Revelation, we find the expression used four times. In chapter 3. 5, our Lord says, "He that overcometh shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not *blot out his name out of the Book of Life.*" Again in chapter 13. 8. In the 20th chapter, we have the Great Judgment described, "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life:*" "and whosoever was not found *written in the Book of Life,* was cast into the lake of fire." The last passage which I shall refer to is in chapter 21. 27, "And there shall in no wise enter into it (into heaven) any thing that defileth—but they

which are *written in the Lamb's Book of Life.*"

Such is the truth of Scripture. God has in the world a number who *profess* to be his people. They are called by his name, and they *outwardly* belong to Him. But besides these, He has also his little flock of *real, true* believers. The world may know little of them; "nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord *knoweth them that are his:*" "My sheep hear my voice, I *know* them, and they follow me." 2 Timothy 2. 19; John 10. 27. All that they are, all that they have, and all that they will enjoy hereafter, they owe to Him. He takes care of them, He keeps them by his power, He brings them to Christ, and at length conducts them to heaven. "I give unto my sheep

eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." John 10. 28.

Oh, what are earthly honours, the highest titles, the noblest rank, the richest possessions, compared with this? Think of this glorious, unchanging, portion! To be a traveller on earth, and yet a possessor of heaven! Well might our Lord caution his disciples against resting on *outward* blessings, and *outward* gifts, however precious. They had the power of working miracles, and of casting out evil spirits: but He says to them, "Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written heaven."

And now, my brethren, I w

call your attention to some important points connected with this doctrine.

First of all, I would observe, that *the most blessed truths of Scripture are sometimes sadly misunderstood*, and abused, by the ungodly. This is one.

Now, is there any one in this assembly, who is inclined to say, "If the names of all God's saved ones are written in heaven, and mine is not among the number, then it matters not how I live—my case is hopeless." Brethren, if this has been your feeling whilst I have been speaking to you, it is Satan's doing. And such a feeling is altogether contrary to God's word.

There we are told, that every one who heartily seeks an entrance into the kingdom of heaven shall find it. There we are told, that no sinner who turns to Christ in earnest shall

be rejected. These are the Saviour's own words, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." And this is his invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."

Do not say to yourself, "Perhaps I am not among the number of the saved." But say this, "I am a lost sinner, and without Christ I must be lost for ever. He has shed his blood for such as I am. I will go and ask Him to save *me*—me, who am the chief of sinners—me, who have so long despised Him! I will go and cast myself on his mercy." And, brethren, I promise this, that no one who thus earnestly flies to Christ can be lost.

But, *secondly*, there is a question *which* is deeply interesting to us all—

“ *how shall we know* that our names are written in heaven?” I can fancy that some of you are ready to exclaim, “ Oh, what happiness, if we could know that *our* names were among the saved, registered among the blest, who shall share God’s presence for ever ! How little should we crave after the blessings of earth, if we could only be assured, that we were written among God’s elect in the Lamb’s Book of Life !”

And *can* we know this ? Every true believer in Christ has a hope, be it strong or weak, that his name is written there. At times he believes that he is the object of God’s electing love ; he clings to Christ, and rejoices in his union with Him. But at other times, a cloud may seem for a while to hide God from him, his hope is well nigh gone. Still, I believe, the

more we advance in grace, the stronger is our hope. Our faint hope is exchanged for a strong confidence, and a humble, but believing, assurance.

In answer to the question, "How may we know that *our* names are written in heaven?" I reply that such an assurance is only granted to those, who have a true and lively faith, and are living very near to God. Hear what the Apostle John says, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." 1 John 5. 10. And again, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may *know* that ye have eternal life." Verse 13.

This at least is clear, that no man who is living an ungodly life has any ground for believing that *his* name is

written in heaven. None will be gathered into their Father's presence above, but those who have been fitted for it *here*. The heart must be changed *now*, the love of God must be felt, the work must be begun in the soul, or, be assured, there will be no heaven for us.

In short, my dear brethren, do you feel that the work of the Spirit is going on within you? Is your heart touched and melted by the constraining love of Christ? Is it your wish to devote yourself to Him? Do you love his people? Is his word your daily food? Is prayer your comfort? Are his sabbaths your delight? Then you may hope, you may believe, you may rejoice, that *your* name is written in heaven!

But, *thirdly*, this truth ought to

keep God's people very humble. It reminds them that they owe everything to the unchanging love of God. What were we all by nature? Born in sin, and the children of wrath! And if we are anything different *now*—if, whilst many are loving sin, and hastening on to everlasting ruin, *we* see things differently—then “who made us to differ?” St. Paul himself says, in the fulness of his heart, “By the grace of God I am what I am.” 1 Corinthians 15. 10.

I am sure that this is just what every Christian man among us feels. He is ready to say, “Once I was a traveller on the broad road. And there, if left to myself, I should have wandered on; but the Lord in mercy turned my steps, and led me by his grace into a better path. He took me by the hand. He drew me with the

cords of love, and turned my feet into the way of peace."

If ever we are inclined to pride ourselves on what we *are*, oh, let us remember what we *were*. Let us be very thankful for what God *has* done for us, and let us humbly trust Him for the future. In his hands alone we are safe, "kept (as St. Peter says) by the power of God through faith unto salvation."

I have shown you, brethren, that there is nothing in this truth to encourage an ungodly liver. There is nothing in it to make the penitent sinner despair. There is much in it to humble, and to comfort those, whose hearts are given to God. May it be a precious truth to you! May you go home the better for having it placed before you!

May it make you thoughtful!
These poor bodies of ours are daily
decaying, and giving way. This poor
world is soon coming to a close. One
thing only is really important to us—

Are we saved? Have we God for
our Father, Christ for our Saviour,
the Spirit for our Teacher? Have
we good grounds for hoping that our
“names are written in heaven?”

And now, I cannot close without
saying one or two words to those who
are living without Christ. Oh, that
I could make you think! Oh, that
you would give me your serious atten-
tion, if it was only for a minute.
Your names are all written in the
Book—the register Book of the
Parish. And the time will
likely come, when it may be of
consequence to you to get a copy
of the register—to obtain a certificate

your name being written in that Book. But, my dear friends, there is a much more solemn Book than this—the Book of God! And the time is coming, when it will be of great, of infinite importance, to find that your name is registered in that Book! When the happy names are read out of those, who are written among the redeemed in heaven, what will be your feelings of despair, when you discover that your name is passed over.

Let the thought of this sink into your heart. Carry it away with you. Turn it over in your minds. Let it bring you on your knees before God. Seek, seek at once, to have your heart changed. Seek an interest in the Saviour. Then, when you and I shall stand together before God's throne, and the Books are opened,

you, even you, will be able to rejoice
with me that your name is found
written in the Book of Life.

SERMON XI.

THE GREAT WHITE THRONE.

REVELATION 20. 11—15.

“And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away ; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God ; and the books were opened : and another book was opened, which is the Book of Life : and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the Books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it ; and death and hell gave up the dead which were in them : and they were judged, every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is

the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of Life was cast into the lake of fire."

THIS is a very awful and heart-stirring passage. But, solemn as it is, I well know that it will just glide over our minds, unheeded, and soon forgotten; unless the Spirit of God prepares our hearts to receive it. May God speak by it to some souls to-day! May it be a powerful voice to many; and may they hear it for their everlasting good!

That part of the Bible which is called the book of Revelation was written by St. John. God was pleased to show him in a vision many things, which are yet to come. He gives him, as it were, a glimpse of the heavenly world; and allows him to behold much, which is hidden from our eyes.

In the chapter before us, he describes to us a very solemn scene; something which you and I shall one day behold for ourselves. He tells us what he himself saw of the Great Judgment.

He describes to us, in the first place, that great and holy Being who is to be our Judge.

Then next he speaks of those who are to be judged.

And, thirdly, of the sentence passed upon them.

I. "I saw (he says) a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away."

This is Christ, our Saviour and our Judge. He once appeared on earth as "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." He was "despised and rejected of men," scorned and reviled.

But now he is highly exalted, and reigns in heaven, a King for ever. St. John saw him sitting on his great white throne. And so awful was his presence, and so glorious his appearance, that it is said, the very "earth and the heaven fled away."

What would be the astonishment of a man, to be taken from his cottage, and to be made to stand before the throne of an *earthly* Sovereign? What must be the feelings of a prisoner hurried from his dungeon, and brought before an *earthly* Judge? But this will be nothing to the feeling of awe which we shall experience, when we shall stand before "the great white throne, and Him that sitteth upon it." We shall feel that his eye pierces through our very souls, and reads at one glance the whole history of our lives. We

shall feel that he is all holiness, and that we are all sin ; that He is all power, and that we are all weakness. Oh, this will indeed be the most glorious sight to some, and the most awful sight to others. But we must not now dwell upon it. Let us rather pass on to notice,

2ndly. Those that are ranged before Him. And who are they ? The largest company that ever met. If all belonging to any one country were to be gathered together, it would be an enormous assembly. But here will be a whole world met together ; all that have ever lived here on earth ; from the first man Adam, to the last man that ever breathed. All we have ever heard of, and all we have ever read of, will be there—Enoch, and Noah, and Abraham, and

Pharoah king of Egypt, and wicked Balaam, Paul the great Apostle and servant of Christ, and Judas who betrayed him. The proudest king, and the poorest beggar, will stand side by side. Old men, who were allowed a long time of trial here, and little children, who passed quickly through this world. The heathen, who lived and died without any knowledge of the God who made him, or of the Saviour who redeemed him ; and the professing Christian to whom the word of salvation was proclaimed. The hard-hearted sinner will be there, who denied the Lord that bought him. The worldly man, who chose his portion here, and thought not of another world ; and the waverer, who knew what was right, but never gave his heart to God. All, all will be there. And you and I, my brethren,

will be at that meeting too. And great as the numbers will be, each one will plainly see the "great white throne, and Him that sitteth upon it." And each one will meet the eye of that Almighty Being, just as if he was the only one that stood before Him.

St. John says, "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God." "And the sea gave up the dead that were in it; and death and hell gave up the dead that were in them: and they were judged, every man according to their works." Not only those who shall be found alive at Christ's coming, but all who have died before. The grave shall give up the bodies of men. Hell shall give up the souls of the wicked. The sea shall give up the many who seemed to have been lost in it. St. Matthew, speaking of

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that great assembly, says, " When the Son of man cometh in his glory, and all his holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations ; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats." Matthew 25. 31, 32.

Oh, it will be the most glorious and awful sight that we ever beheld ! The greatness and holiness of the Judge ! The fearful agony that will mark the faces of some ; the calm and peaceful joy that will be seen upon the countenances of others ! Some trembling with alarm, well knowing what their sentence must be : and others already rejoicing, because they are fully assured, that He who sits upon the throne is the Saviour, whom they have loved. Such will be that

tremendous assembly, gathered before the great white throne.

III. And now let me speak of the solemn trial which will then take place.

St. John says, "And the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the Book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things, which were written in the books, according to their works: and death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire."

Here you see certain books are spoken of, out of which we shall be judged. Do not suppose that God has any need of these. All is known to Him. The exact state of each has

been settled long before in his mind. What then are these books? They are to show that all, that we have ever done, is known and remembered in heaven. How easily do we forget even our most glaring sins! They alarm us for a moment. They make us feel uncomfortable at the time; and, it may be, for a few days or weeks our uneasiness remains. But the impression soon dies away. Not so with God. Every sin is as fresh in his remembrance, as it was on the very day when it was committed. Every thought that has passed through our minds; every word that has escaped our lips; every action that we have done, and every action that we have left undone; all, all will be disclosed then. At present, sinners are very bold. They carry things with a high hand. They "draw iniquity

with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart-rope. They say, Let him make speed, and hasten his work." Isaiah 5. 18, 19. Many of them do not blush when they are caught in sin. But *then* the stoutest-hearted sinner will tremble: for "who shall abide the day of Christ's coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?" Then the heart of the ungodly will die within him; then will begin his "shame and everlasting contempt." There is many a wicked man now who comforts himself with this—that his sin is not known—that no eye sees it. But in that day the most secret sins—sins done in the dark—will be brought to light. How would some blush, if I were now to go over, before this congregation, the secret sins you have committed, even during the past week. How much

more in that day, when the whole catalogue of your sins, the whole history of your lives, shall be laid bare before an assembled world !

But, will it be only the sins of the wicked that will be read out of God's Book ? There will also be many a blessed deed, which was done out of love to Christ—many an act of holiness and self-denial, done by a child of God for his Saviour's sake. Even the cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple—even Mary's ointment—will not then be passed over. Not that any act of ours, even our best deeds, deserve to be rewarded ; for there is sin mixed with every one of them. But then, if they are done in faith, from love to the Saviour, they are accepted for his sake, and they are pleasing to God.

But we read in our text of the

“Books” being opened—more books than one. We have already spoken about the Book of God’s remembrance, in which all our actions are written. But another great and important book will be brought forward on that day; a book which many have despised, and many have neglected; the inspired Book of Scripture. That book will be spread out to show that we are judged, not according to men’s opinions, but according to God’s word, which he has given us.

But there is yet another Book spoken of in our text; “And another Book was opened, which is the Book of Life.” This is intended to show that all God’s true people are known to him. Their names are written in heaven. He is acquainted with each one, though they may have been

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passed over by their fellow-men. Not one of his dear children shall be missing at his right hand.

So then, brethren, you see, all will rise again ; all will meet before the great white throne ; all will be judged. But that awful meeting will last but a short time ; and then it will be broken up for ever. Many who stand together then, will part to meet no more. Two great divisions will be made, and two only—the sheep and the goats ; the righteous and the wicked ; those who have served Christ and those who have neglected it ; salvation ; the lost and the saved. And there will be two portions : two only—heaven and hell ; eternal life and everlasting misery !

Brethren, we are now met in the house of God. Here we sit toge-

and kneel together, and pray together, and sing together, bad and good alike. But it will not always be so. The separating day will come. Ah, when the righteous Judge sits upon his throne, there will indeed be awful discoveries. We shall see many on the left hand, whom we little expected to find *there*. We shall exclaim with astonishment, "What! can this man be there, who was once so fair a professor, so active, and so well thought of by the congregation on earth? What! is it possible that that other who talked so well, and knew so much, can his have been mere head-knowledge after all? What! did this man, who was so regular in his pew, and so respectable in his appearance—did he sit through a lifetime, an unconverted sinner? Did he live and die a mere church-goer, and

sermon-hearer, and is he now on the left hand?

But some discoveries then, how blessed will they be! To see some who were very dear to us on earth, and who journeyed with us on the same heavenly road, and are now going to enter with us into that home which they longed for! It may be, too, our eye will rest on here and there one of our neighbours, whom we little hoped to find so highly exalted. True, the face was a familiar face to us among our Sabbath worshippers; but we knew nothing of a work of grace in that heart. But God knew that soul; he was blessing it, and leading it on to glory.*

But it is now time that I should be

* See Miller's Sermon on Preaching; page 30.

bringing my Sermon to a conclusion. It may be thought by some, that I have chosen a very alarming subject for my address to you to-day. Yes, it is a very alarming subject to the thoughtless, worldly, ungodly man. Oh that whilst I have been reasoning with you of temperance, righteousness, and judgment to come, I may have made some of you tremble!

O sinner, stop; and just ask yourself, how you will feel in that day. You will then be alone. Though surrounded by millions, you will feel alone, naked, forsaken, without one plea, without one friend. And that dear Friend, who was once so ready to help you and to save you, will no longer be the sinner's Friend, but the sinner's Judge! Oh where will you turn? Read the sentence in the text: You will be "cast into the lake of

fire, which is the second death.” The first death will be terrible enough to you ; for it is an awful thing to die without hope. But the second death will be far, far more terrible. It is a death that is no death. It is worse than a thousand deaths. It is a kind of living death ; unspeakable sufferings that will never end ; pains that will for ever rack the body, and agonies that will tear the mind !

That, my dear brethren, will be indeed a day of vengeance. But now, thank God, now it is a time of mercy. Is there something within you which seems to say, “ Oh, that I could flee from the wrath to come ? ” You *can* flee from it. There is a way of escape. Christ is willing to receive you, and to make you his. If there is one man in this church, who mourns over his sins, who feels his danger, and

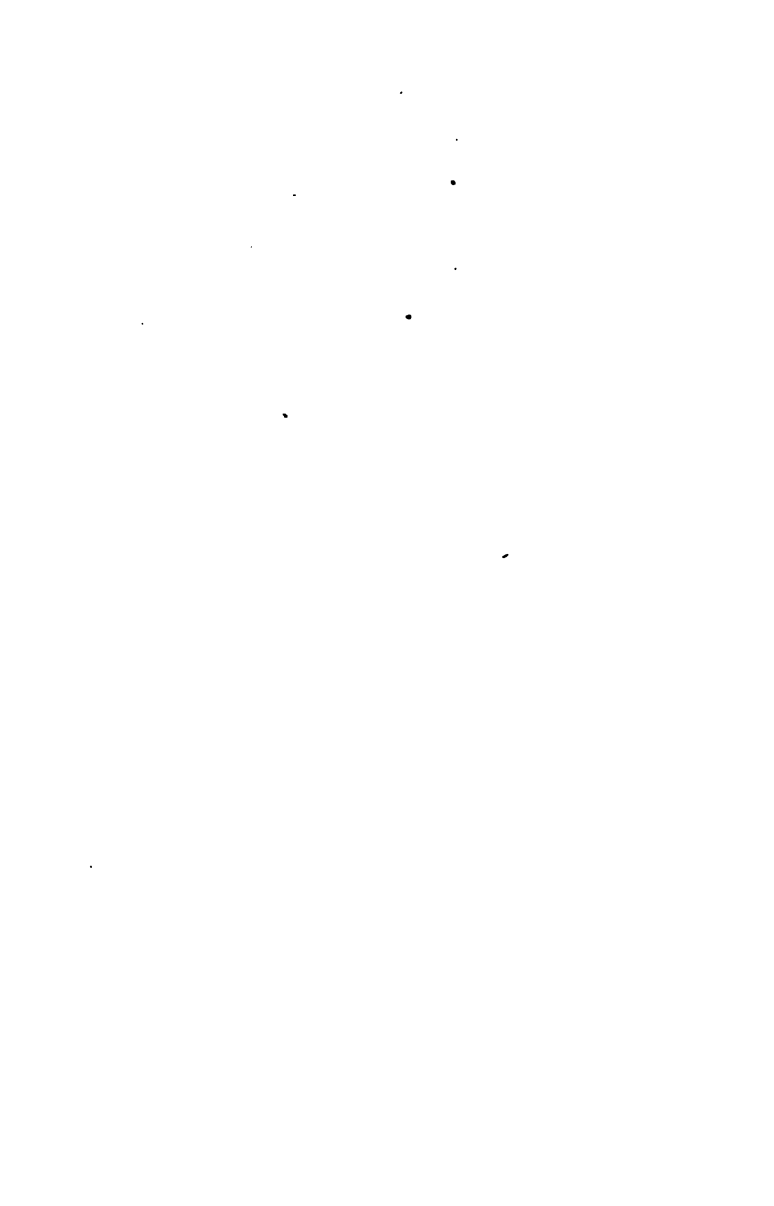
who is anxious that he may obtain mercy, I would say to that man, Christ came to save the lost. He can save you. His blood can wash away every stain of guilt. He can give you pardon and deliverance.

How happy if we can think of death without alarm, and look forward to the Day of Judgment without any misgiving ! And yet, if we are his we may do so. He will shelter us. We are safe in his hands. It will be all well with us, as long as we remain here ; and then he will take us to be with him for ever !

THE END.

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